

Black Mirror

Chapter 1

Leaving for the Summer

Harry Potter stood on top of the Astronomy Tower looking out over the grounds of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. The late afternoon sun slanted through the trees, glittering on the lake below, where the giant squid was sunning lazily. Smiling to herself, she watched her Protectors from above with interest.

Severus was sitting by the lake on one of the benches keeping a wary eye on his niece Phaedra. He had conjured a swing for her and suspended it from one of the heavy branches of an old oak. Phaedra was laughing with delight as she propelled herself higher and higher unmindful of her uncle's words of caution.

Sirius and Remus were talking with Professor Dumbledore. Remus was nodding in agreement. Whatever the old man was telling them Sirius' handsome features had broken out into a mischievous grin. A moment later, he tilted his head back. His barking laugh drifted up to her on the faint breeze. Harry suspected that the old man had reminded them of one of the infamous pranks from their school years when the two of them, her father, and Peter Pettigrew had been known as the Marauders.

The castle grounds were otherwise quiet now, the students having left the week before for the summer. Most of the staff had likewise departed earlier in the day for a much-needed holiday. Harry would also be leaving shortly along with them.

Tiberius Snape had gone ahead of them to oversee the final preparations of the house elves for the reopening of Snape Manor where they would all be making their home. Severus had assured her that it did not have any of the gloomy atmosphere of Grimmauld Place. He had told her that the manor was his ancestral home. The building and grounds stood on a hill overlooking the village of Snape in Suffolk. Their marriage would take place in Snape Church down in the village, as was his family custom. It was to be a private ceremony with Dumbledore officiating. A reception for the invited guests would

be held at the manor. There was to be a special celebration for the villagers. The wedding was scheduled for mid July. Neither Harry nor Severus had seen the need for a lengthy engagement since under wizarding law they were merely formalizing the Right of Union. The Right of Protection had already bound them by blood in a form of unconsummated marriage.

Harry had chosen not to take a honeymoon. She was too well known following the final defeat of Voldemort. Even though the initial furor had died down the press continued to hound her and all she wanted was to be left alone. She simply wanted some privacy and to start on her life. Harry also had a feeling that her protectors had something planned for her birthday. She smiled happily wondering what they were trying to keep from her. Right now though all was right with the world.

It had been four months since Harry had vanquished Voldemort's soul back to the afterlife following his physical resurrection through Necromancy. She had then destroyed his physical form in an effort to assure no further attempts at bringing him back to life. The same had been done to Lucius Malfoy one of his lieutenants. Harry fervently hoped that they were rotting in Hell.

Unfortunately, victory had come at a price. Voldemort had resurrected Harry's parents in an effort to control and destroy her. It hadn't worked but in order to stop the Dark Lord she also had to send her parents souls back to the afterlife from whence they had been stolen. Harry was heartbroken to have had them so near only to have to send them back. James and Lily had been proud of her though for doing what was right rather than what was easy. Each had assured her that they had been in a wonderful place and would always be with her even though she could not see them.

Phaedra had also suffered the loss of her parents. The little girl had witnessed their deaths during their escape attempt after the Dark Lord had captured them in Hogsmeade. Harry was sure Severus and Tiberius felt the loss as much as Phaedra but both men were too proud to openly show their feelings. Harry's empathic senses had picked up on their guilt over their inability to save them. Justinian had died early in the battle. Ironically, Circe Snape had died in the same

manner as Lily Potter had. She took a killing curse meant for Phaedra just before help had arrived.

There had been other losses too. Mr. and Mrs. Granger, Sirius' cousin Nymphadora Tonks, Charlie Weasley and a number of Aurors had all been killed. Harry began to feel responsible for not being able to do more to save them. Grimacing she remembered how Arsinoe Darkmoon had betrayed them. The beautiful witch had succumbed to the Dark Lord through her jealousy of Harry. Arsinoe had been furious that Harry had been chosen to assume the power of the winged serpent god so prized by the ancient wizards of her tribe.

"Stop it," Harry whispered aloud to herself. "It's over now. Put it in the past where it belongs. It's time you got a life!"

Harry absently twisted the engagement ring on her finger. It had been the happiest day of her life when Severus had proposed during the Leaving Feast. He had shown up late and presented her with the ring in front of the whole school. It was a diamond surrounded with alternating emeralds and rubies. Her soul had burst with joy. The once wicked Potions Master was her Soulmate and she loved him so much it hurt.

Remus and Sirius had also been happy for her. She loved them too but also knew they were Soulmates to one another and lovers. Now neither would have to sacrifice their love. They would be bound to her by the blood ritual of the Protectorship and could still be with each other without feeling guilt or betrayal. Harry idly wondered if same sex marriage was allowed in wizarding society. She determined to find out. If so, then circumstances had kept Sirius and Remus apart for far too long. If not, then Harry knew how discreet they both were about their relationship. She would make sure they had their privacy to maintain their intimate relations.

It pleased her that all of them would now be together as a family. Harry would finally have what she had craved for so long and Phaedra would be able to grow up surrounded by a loving aunt and uncles. She would never know the pain of feeling unwanted as Harry had at the Dursleys. Harry was pulled from her reverie by the sound of Phaedra's voice calling to her.

"Miss Harry come on! Uncle Sev says it's time to go." Phaedra was waving up at her excitedly while running over towards where Sirius and Remus were speaking with Dumbledore. Severus followed close behind.

"I'll be right down," Harry called.

They all looked up towards the tower and Harry waved back with a grin. Climbing onto the narrow battlement, she spread her arms falling forward in a graceful dive, transforming into her phoenix. Gliding down with a fanciful loop she landed on Severus' outstretched arm.

"Harry must you always seek attention?" Severus arched his brow pretending to scowl.

"Show off!" Sirius teased.

"Well done Harry," Dumbledore praised blue eyes twinkling.

"Princess you're liable to make Fawkes jealous with all this praise," Remus laughed.

"I like Miss Harry's pretty phoenix," Phaedra commented delightedly while she reached over to pet her soft feathers.

Harry trilled softly before fluttering down to the ground and returning to her human form.

"You know Harry there is something to be said about being able to fly without the use of a broom." Remus winked with a half smile.

"It sure beats having to run down all those stairs from the tower," she laughed.

"I'll drink to that," Sirius agreed grinning.

"Miss Harry will I be able to turn into an animal when I get big?"

"It is unlikely Phaedra. It is not a talent that is often found in our family," Severus answered before Harry had a chance to reply.

"Humph...Just because you can't do it doesn't mean I won't be able to," Phaedra pouted stubbornly sticking out her chin.

Sirius snickered at Phaedra's comment while Severus looked sternly at his niece, lips set in a firm line. He did not wish to lose his temper over her brief impudence. Remus interceded in his practical manner.

"Your uncle is right when he says it's not likely," he smiled patiently, "but that doesn't mean it's impossible."

"You see I can be an animal too!" Phaedra beamed with excitement.

"You'll have to study really hard in Transfiguration when you come to Hogwarts Phaedra." Dumbledore looked at her over his half moon spectacles smiling with amusement.

"What animal do you think you would be Phaedra?" Harry asked curiously.

"An owl."

"Why an owl?" Severus questioned with interest.

"So I could write a letter to mummy and daddy and know where to bring it to them," she stated tossing her head.

The adults shifted uncomfortably. Phaedra missed her parents especially her mother. She still had occasional nightmares and was afraid of losing anyone else. Severus pulled her into a gentle hug his dark eyes worried.

"Phaedra all you need to do is think about them and they'll know. I told you that," he explained softly.

"I know Uncle Severus but I wish I could see my mummy again."

"Me too," he comforted with understanding.

"Phaedra how about if you and I take a trip to Diagon Alley this week?" Harry asked to distract her from the subject of her parents. "We still need to get our wedding clothes."

“Could we have a day of beauty like I used to with mummy?”

“Absolutely. We can have lunch at the Chinese restaurant if you like too and get some ice cream later at Fortescues.”

“Can we go to Mr. Fred and George’s joke shop too?”

“What ever you want. It will be our day out.”

“Girls only?”

“Unless you want them to come too?” Harry grinned nodding over at the three men.

“No but maybe Miss Hermione and Mrs. Weasley and Ginny could come too.”

“Then we’ll call them on the floo tonight before it gets too late and ask. I’m sure they would all enjoy it. It will be our treat,” Harry said, knowing that Mrs. Weasley wouldn’t want to spend the extra money frivolously.

“Will it be all right Uncle Sev?” Phaedra looked up at him hopefully.

“I think it will be all right so long as you are all careful,” he answered, giving Harry a silent warning of caution not wanting to disappoint Phaedra.

“Goody! We’re going to have fun. I like buying new stuff.”

“Then I suggest we get on our way. The sooner we get home the sooner you can complete all your plans,” Severus remarked stoically.

“How are we traveling to the manor?” Harry questioned. Phaedra was too young to apparate and no one had mentioned getting a portkey.

“We will be taking the train to Ipswich and then switching to a local in Saxmundham. That will bring us within five miles of the village. We can take a taxi from there.”

“I guess there is no floo connection?” Sirius asked.

"It will not be on line until this evening. My uncle chose not to live there alone since he has to travel so extensively. While the house elves have kept the castle in readiness, the floo was shut down except for messages. It is one of the things that Tiberius was attending to before our arrival."

"I remember the castle from when I was there with my father as a boy. I think we were about seven at the time," Sirius commented grinning at Severus. "Phaedra and Harry will enjoy exploring it. I know I did."

"Wait a minute! I thought you said it was a manor house." Harry looked sharply at Severus.

"Snape Manor is actually a castle. The original building was put up in about 1250 as a country manor. It has been called Snape Manor ever since although the present castle is no where near as grand as Hogwarts." Severus shrugged matter of factly. "The town has been inhabited since the Romans came."

"We're really going to live in a castle?" Phaedra questioned brown eyes wide with excitement.

"A small one," Dumbledore responded amused. "And if you don't get moving you'll miss the express to Ipswich."

"Albus is right," Remus agreed glancing at his watch. "Sirius can tell us all about what kind of mischief he caused there as a boy while we are on the train. I'm sure it will be a fascinating story."

Severus scowled at Sirius. Harry had the distinct impression that Sirius had gotten them in trouble during that visit. She was positive when Sirius winked at Severus unable to contain the wicked expression on his face. Remus looked on in consternation but wisely kept his mouth shut.

They all bade a hurried farewell to Dumbledore and headed up the path towards Hogsmeade to catch the train for Suffolk. Harry was almost as excited as Phaedra was. She was curious to see the castle but a bit disconcerted as well. Perhaps if she felt it was too austere they could spend more time in London at Severus' town home.

Remus also had a small house in Wales and she knew that Sirius owned other property besides Grimmauld Place. Unfortunately, his Uncle Alphard had willed his London home to a distant niece. Harry also considered rebuilding the house in Godric's Hollow. She wondered if she owned any other property.

Her thoughts were interrupted as they reached the station and barely got on the train in time. Following Sev and the others into an empty compartment she made a mental note to question Sirius about her holdings later on since he managed her estate along with Dumbledore.

"So are we going to get to hear about whatever trouble you caused at Snape Manor?" Harry looked mischievously at Sirius once they were settled in their seats. She could see Severus stiffen in his seat beside her out of the corner of her eye.

"I'm not too sure Severus wants me to tell my little tale to you love," Sirius answered innocently.

"Obviously you got him into some kind of trouble," Remus commented dryly.

"I was just having a little fun."

"Uncle Sev did Mr. Sirius do something bad to you when you were little?"

"In a manner of speaking," Severus responded glaring at Sirius.

"Sev was it all that bad that you can't laugh about it now that you're grown?" Harry looked at him nervously.

"If you really must know I was showing your godfather the dungeons. There were some old shackles there and he thought it would be fun to experiment with them. I ended up chained to the wall and he took off and closed the door."

"How long were you stuck there?"

"Most of the day. Apparently your godfather told everyone that I had gone for a walk on the grounds. No one found me for quite some time."

"I'm sure they were all relieved when they did."

"Actually my father was furious. He said that I should never have allowed myself to be manipulated into such a situation. I was severely punished for failing into such a simple trap. My father berated me all the way home."

"I'm sorry Severus I never knew," Sirius stated honestly. "If it's any consolation I was given a hell of a beating by my mother and punished for a week."

"Didn't you live at the castle?"

"No Harry. My uncle was the heir. We were there visiting. My father wanted to get to know the Black family more intimately and Sirius' father had some business with Uncle Tiberius. It was felt that your godfather and I should get to know one another better since it was assumed we would be traveling in the same social circles when we got to Hogwarts."

"Well that obviously was not the case," Remus remarked, "but it was a long time ago and should be nothing more than water under the bridge now."

"What do water and bridges have to do with Uncle Sev being locked in a dungeon?"

"It's just an expression Phaedra. It means it was a long time ago and should be forgotten," Harry explained.

"Mr. Sirius I love you but you were a really bad boy sometimes."

"I was always in trouble Phaedra," Sirius laughed. "I liked to play pranks on people but sometimes I never thought about the consequences." Sirius glanced between Remus and Severus and Harry knew he was thinking about the incident with the Shrieking Shack.

The rest of the train ride to Ipswich was spent in pleasant conversation and Harry played a game of exploding snap with Phaedra. She was anxious to get to the castle, have a hot bath, and relax after dinner. She also needed to contact her friends about the day out with Phaedra. They made their connection to the local train at Saxmundham in plenty of time and the twenty-minute trip was uneventful. As promised a taxi was waiting for them at the station. Harry was glad their luggage had been sent on ahead. Climbing into the taxi she realized it was a wizarding car. Severus merely arched his brow in amusement.

“Welcome home m’Lord. It be good to see the castle occupied again. My name is Clarence Spellcaster.” The jovial cabbie bowed to Severus.

“Thank you Clarence.” Snape nodded curtly. “We are in a bit of a hurry. It has been a long day and the ladies are tired.”

“Right. I’ll have ya up to the castle in a jiffy.” He climbed into the cab and whisked them on their way.

Harry studied the cab driver with interest. He was short and bulky with a ruddy complexion and a rather flat nose. A tuft of brown hair stuck out from beneath his cap. He was obviously a wizard and appeared to be middle aged but Harry couldn’t say for certain. He glanced at Harry in his rear view mirror and she was grateful that her fringe covered the scar on her forehead. Even though it was now faded and smaller it would never be completely gone and was a dead give away as to her identity.

“Is it a long drive up to the castle?” Harry asked pleasantly when he caught her looking at him.

“No Miss. We’ll be there in about fifteen minutes once we get over the bridge and out of this traffic. Ye’ll be able to see it from there. No need to hide it from the Muggles since they have known of its existence for centuries. Don’t know his Lordship is a wizard though,” he laughed.

“I take it the village is both wizard and muggle?” Remus asked.

"Aye. There are also some squibs there too. We all get along although the Muggles don't realize they are livin' side by side with magic folk. We were luckier than most durin' the war. The Dark Lord only sent in his Dementors and then only once."

"Did anyone lose their soul?" Sirius questioned.

"Aye, three Muggles and a squib. We were lucky the Aurors arrived when they did though or it could have been much worse. Happened just before the New Year celebrations were about to start."

"I don't like Dementors," Phaedra stated moving closer to Harry.
"They are cold and scary."

"Aye that they are."

"Well that's all over with now and the whole village is lookin' forward to the celebration next month. Should be almost as good as the one followin' the end of the war. Everyone's talkin' 'bout the weddin' especially since the young viscount weren't wed in the village last time." He glanced in the mirror at Snape who merely ignored the comment. "All we know is that the bride is supposed to be someone important."

"I never knew your uncle was an Earl," Harry commented looking daggers at Severus for not telling her he was a viscount.

"Most of the Pureblood families are gentry Harry," Sirius remarked calmly. "We just don't hold seats in the Muggle Parliament. You know our government is kept separate."

The cab driver swung his head over his shoulder at the comment and almost had to slam on his brakes to avoid hitting another car. His eyes were open wide as he looked at the small group of travelers accompanying the heir to the manor.

"Holy shit! You be Harry Potter!"

"Clarence that will be quite enough of that language in front of my niece!" Severus snapped.

"Beggin' yer pardon M'Lord. I was just so takin' aback by seein' Harry Potter in me cab."

"It's all right Clarence I'm used to the reactions by now and call me Harry please."

"Aye it will be a pleasure. I know yer part of a Protectorship. Are these two yer Protectors?" he questioned looking for new information to gossip with amongst his mates.

"Actually all three of them are my protectors."

"But...does that mean...Er...Are ye going ter take the formal rites with the viscount?"

Harry glanced at Severus who was glaring at the cabbie but holding his temper while Remus pretended to look out the window and Sirius lowered his head to hide the smirk on his lips.

"Is he asking if you and Uncle Severus are getting married?" Phaedra demanded.

"In a manner of speaking," Harry replied feeling the color rise to her cheeks.

"Oh. Well then they are. I am going to be in the wedding."

"Is that so Miss?" Clarence smiled.

Harry could sense the man's excitement. She was sure that he would head for the local pub as soon as he dropped them off.

"Clarence could you do me a favor and not say anything to your mates about this. I really would like some privacy and it gets hard some times with people always wanting to get close. I'm really just an ordinary person."

"If ye really want me ter I won't say nothin' to me mates," he said trying to conceal the disappointment in his voice.

"There will be an extra large tip in it for you tonight if you do that for my goddaughter."

"Christ you have to be Sirius Black and that means..."

"I'm Remus Lupin." Remus finished for him.

"Welcome to our village. We be glad to have ye here. All o' ya." Clarence glanced in his mirror at Lupin. "And if Mr. Lupin ever needs anythin' just let me know. My sister has the same problem and he helped her through it a few years back. I dunno if ye'll remember her though."

"What is her name?" Remus asked with understanding.

"Sandra Claypit. She lives on a small farm near Wales. Doesn't like ter be too close to people ya know."

"Ah...I do remember her. Her husband abandoned her after she was bitten and took their children with him. It must be at least ten years ago. We still correspond from time to time."

"Aye. She said you kept her from takin' her life and helped her to see that she could make a life fer herself. Most of our kin don't talk with her no more but I refuse to be like that. She's still me sister 'cept when the moon is full and then she takes some potion to keep her head when she ken get it."

"Wolfsbane Potion," Remus stated.

"I shall see that she gets a supply for your silence regarding my fiancé," Severus commented. "It can be stored for up to six months and I need to make it for Lupin anyway."

"Thank you M'Lord. If ya ever need anythin' just ask. I am much beholdin' ter ya."

"I shall make note of it Clarence."

"Ah...we're almost there. Ye'll be able ter see the castle when we get around the next bend Miss Potter...Er...Harry."

Harry looked up and gave him a wink, green eyes sparkling with interest, as he rounded the bend. The castle was standing up on a hill overlooking lush green fields that led down to the river where there was an old mill. The village sprawled out around the river. It appeared that at one time the mill had been one of the main industries. Harry's heart was pounding with excitement. It was a lovely setting and while not as imposing as Hogwarts it was quite beautiful.

"Well what do you think?" Sirius questioned. "Would you say that Severus' ancestral home is somewhere where we could all be happy?"

"I think I better keep a good eye on Phaedra. If I know Sev there is at least one secret passage in that building." Harry looked at Severus who was studying her with his familiar sneer. "It is lovely though."

Severus inclined his head in agreement as the cabbie turned up the long drive. Harry was tired and hungry but couldn't help feeling a bit overwhelmed. In all her life she had never anticipated living in such an imposing home. The cab pulled up to the front of the manor and Tiberius came out to greet them. Phaedra bounced out of the car first and ran over to her uncle. He scooped her up affectionately.

"Welcome to Snape Manor Harry. I know Sirius was here many years ago but I don't believe Remus has had the pleasure."

"No. Although I am somewhat familiar with the history of the village and the house," Remus offered shaking his hand in greeting.

"I want to see the dungeons," Phaedra laughed.

"Perhaps we could get Sirius to show them to you," Severus teased his mood lightening. "Just don't let him talk you into trying any shackles."

"I kind of thought he might like to try them on," Phaedra giggled.

"Heaven help us all. She's as bad as Sirius," Remus chuckled as they entered the large foyer.

"The elves will show you to your rooms to freshen up before dinner," Tiberius informed them. "Severus I have given you the master suite since you are to be married. I felt it was more appropriate. I have no need of such a large suite of rooms. Harry will be quartered next door with Phaedra until after the wedding when she moves in with you. Remus and Sirius are down the hall on the left."

"Thank you Uncle but are you certain you do not..."

"No Severus. I have no need of the rooms. I have taken the smaller suite at the top of the hall for myself. I am away on business much of the time anyway so it will suit my needs perfectly," he explained as a series of loud pops greeted their ears.

"Harry Potter!" Dobby cried flinging himself around her legs. "Welcome to our new home. It is a most fitting house for such a great witch."

"Thank you Dobby," Harry grinned rolling her eyes, "but could you let go of my legs now?"

"Oh, Dobby is sorry. He did not wish to upset Harry Potter."

"You didn't upset me Dobby and I am very glad to see you. Is Winky here too?"

"I am over here Miss Harry." Winky came forward timidly. "I am going to be your personal elf and will help Hazel look after Miss Phaedra."

"In that case I would really like to take a shower before dinner. It's been a long day."

"Of course Miss Harry. Winky will be honored to take you to your room with Miss Phaedra."

The elves led them up a grand curving staircase. The paneling on the walls was carved with images of magical animals and the portraits hanging in the gallery were whispering amongst themselves. Harry was grateful when she reached the room she would share with Phaedra until after the formal rites. There was a huge canopy bed in the room. It looked like it could sleep four rather than one adult and a

child. The windows overlooked the gardens below. Phaedra was delighted and proceeded to jump on the bed like a trampoline.

"Miss Phaedra," Hazel admonished popping into the room. "You know better than to do that."

"If she jumped any higher she would hit the canopy," Harry giggled at the old house elf. "I admit that if it were just a four poster I wouldn't mind jumping on it too."

"Miss Harry are you teasing this old elf?"

"Who me?" Harry pretended to look innocent but Hazel was having none of it.

"As Mistress of the manor you should be properly dignified," the elf stated firmly.

"Hazel there is a time to be dignified and a time to have some fun and I'll bet you've jumped on more than a few of the beds in this castle."

Hazel just harrumphed and hid behind her ears, which were a bright pink. Harry knew she had caught her unawares and gave the old elf a wink as she headed into the bathroom to take a fast shower.

Dinner was an elegant affair to celebrate the reopening of the manor. The elves prepared a scrumptious feast of roast lamb, potatoes, broccoli, and summer squash. For dessert there was chocolate cake. Remus and Harry were in their glory. Following dinner the men went into the library where there was a large billiards table. Severus enjoyed beating them at snooker. Harry read a book to Phaedra all about baby unicorns and then played a game of wizard's chess. Phaedra was not yet skilled but she put up a good fight almost winning the last match.

It was after eight when Phaedra reminded her to call the Weasley's and Hermione. Harry was able to use the floo in the same room. Mrs. Weasley was reluctant at first but Harry convinced her that it would be her treat and since they all needed new robes for the wedding she could use the advice of the older woman. Ginny was thrilled and never passed up a chance to get new clothes. As luck would have it

Ron and Hermione had been at the Burrow for dinner and Hermione was delighted to have an outing. Since it was Wednesday they all decided to meet on Saturday at the Burrow and then go to Diagon Alley.

Once Harry was finished with the plans for the shopping trip they all went for a walk in the gardens. Sirius couldn't help but transform and was romping around with Phaedra. By the time they retired to bed Phaedra was exhausted and fell right to sleep. Sirius and Remus gave Harry a brief kiss on the cheek before retiring to their room leaving Harry and Severus alone in the hall. Harry couldn't help but snicker as she noticed Sirius give a quick wave of his wand and mutter a silencing charm before he shut the door.

"Now what do you suppose they are up to?" Harry remarked feeling her cheeks grow hot.

"If I need to tell you that perhaps you should have a prenuptial chat with Molly Weasley," Severus said taking her into his arms.

"I don't think that will be necessary," she replied unable to look him in the eyes.

"And why Miss Potter is that?" he teased tilting her chin up to look at him.

"If I need to tell you that perhaps you should be the one having a prenuptial chat with my godfather," she countered.

"Are you sure you don't want to take a brief honeymoon Harry?"

"I'm happy wherever we are so long as we're together. Maybe we can go away some other time. I don't feel comfortable leaving Phaedra yet. Besides it's a big castle. How many bedrooms are there anyway?"

"More than enough," he sneered arching his brow in amusement. "I love you Harry."

"I know and guess what?"

“Hmm?”

“I love you too. If someone had told me when I first went to Hogwarts that I would fall in love with that nasty Potions Master I would have thought they were daft.”

“Indeed and what changed your mind?”

“I grew up and came out of hiding my gender. I saw what was underneath that cold facade you like to show the world and found a very caring sensitive human being.”

“Did you now?”

“Uh huh,” she smiled looking into his dark eyes.

He lowered his head and their lips met in a deep kiss tongues gently exploring each other’s mouths. Severus pressed his body into hers and she arched her back up to meet him. Harry could feel him holding back and was aware of the warmth spreading down from the pit of her stomach into her thighs. She could feel his excitement as he pulled her closer and was aware of his erection. Somewhere in the back of her mind she wished he would just carry her off to his room as their kisses deepened and became more fervent. They snogged for a few more minutes before he gently pulled back withdrawing his tongue from her mouth to kiss the top of her head. Harry rested her head on his chest as he stoked her back.

“I think it’s time you got some sleep,” he murmured reluctant to let her go.

“I would much prefer to stay with you,” she answered boldly.

“I know. However I believe Sirius would hex me unmercifully if I took you to bed before I put a ring on your finger.”

“Since when are you afraid of my godfather?”

“I’m not but I am very much in love with you and don’t want you to feel guilty about being with me before we enact the formal rites.”

“I wouldn’t feel guilty.”

“Perhaps not but I would.”

“Ah...a gentleman to the end,” she teased.

“Go get some sleep. I’ll see you at breakfast.”

“Okay but I will have you know that I am doing so under protest.” She grinned up at him.

“And if I were to tell you that Sirius is standing behind us in his doorway with Lupin watching us what would you say to that?”

“I’d say you are a very good liar.”

“Oh I don’t know about that,” Sirius familiar voice echoed from behind Harry who spun around in shock. He was grinning back at her wickedly and Lupin was smiling behind him. “I may be your protector but I’m still your godfather and I told you I would look out for your virtue.”

“I seem to remember that I said I could handle the problem of my virtue,” she countered trying to sound angry but too embarrassed to pull it off.

“Besides Harry we all swore a wizard’s oath to James that none of us would touch you until after the formal rites,” Lupin admitted blushing.

“Arrrggghhh...” Harry growled at the three wizards before disappearing into her room.

“Somehow I get the feeling she isn’t too happy with any of us right now,” Sirius chuckled.

“She’ll get over it.” Lupin winked. “Besides much as Severus may have wanted to take her with him he really is too much of a gentleman to do so.”

“You are quite right on that score Lupin. I would have had her wait even without the oath.” Severus nodded at the two men. “Goodnight.”

"Goodnight," they responded in unison. Severus disappeared into his room and they turned back to each other resetting the silencing charm as they closed their door.

Harry couldn't help but grin to herself as she got into bed beside Phaedra. Annoyed as she was that they had been sworn to an oath by her father she was still flattered that James had cared about her welfare. She fell asleep thinking about her wedding night with a shiver of excitement coursing through her body.

Chapter 2

Explorations, Bubbles, and Quidditch

Harry spent the next two days exploring the castle with Phaedra. It was an amazing place. There were two small salons for entertaining afternoon guests on the main floor along with an enormous kitchen. Harry discovered that besides Dobby, Winky, and Hazel there were three other house elves. Matilda was the kitchen elf and ran her domain with an iron hand. She told them she had been with Master Tiberius since he was a boy. Davey took care of the gardens and Harry complimented him on how well the flowers looked. The elf just blushed and hid behind his ears. Walley tended to the stables and kennels where they found Snuffles and Hannibal playing with a worn out quaffle. Their two pets greeted them happily but Harry was somewhat disconcerted that her pet was not allowed to come into the castle.

"Master Tiberius insists that the dogs be kept in the kennels Miss," the elf explained nervously when questioned. "He feels they will be happier here and will not make a mess in the castle." Harry only nodded at his answer but determined to ask Tiberius if she could have Snuffles with her at least during the daytime.

Phaedra was delighted when they explored the stables since they found two chestnut Aethonans and a smaller gray Granian. The little girl was fascinated with the winged horses and wanted to ride them. Harry immediately vetoed the idea since she knew Phaedra had never been riding let alone on a horse that could fly. The animals themselves seemed friendly and the stable elf gave the two girls some carrots for them. Harry showed Phaedra how to hold her hand flat with the carrot on her palm to feed the horses. Phaedra giggled when the soft nose brushed her hand as the gray horse took the carrot from her and then whinnied for more. Thanking the elf, they then headed back up to the castle to explore some more of the rooms.

Harry had already seen the formal dining room, which could be expanded to seat as many as one hundred guests. The library was also larger than she first thought and she pictured the look on Hermione's face when she saw it. They also discovered there were

three floors. The topmost floor held attic storage and small rooms for the house elves. The second floor was made up of numerous bedroom suites each of which was decorated in various colors. Harry counted no less than seven bathrooms adorned with different kinds of faucets to accommodate the user's needs.

However, she was completely floored when she opened the door to the formal ballroom. It had four crystal chandeliers suspended from the ceilings. Each one had with what she assumed were magical candles for lighting. One wall was lined with floor to ceiling windows and a set of French doors leading onto a terrace overlooking the gardens. A large lawn led down towards the river. The opposite wall was covered with ornate mirrors to enhance the light and reflect the dancers. A small gallery near the back of the room provided a space for the musicians. Dobby, Winky, and Hazel were in the room polishing the wooden floor and cleaning the windows and mirrors.

"Harry Potter and Miss Phaedra," Dobby said running over to them. "Dobby Winky and Hazel are most happy to tell you the room will be ready for the reception."

"We're having the reception in the ballroom?" Harry had not realized so many people were coming. She had wanted to keep it down to a small party.

"Master Tiberius felt it would be most appropriate," Hazel answered. "There will be a formal dinner and then dancing. We are all looking forward to it. This old castle hasn't seen such good times in many awhile."

"Dobby hopes Miss Harry is not too upset. He knows she only wanted something small but..." he began seeing the expression on Harry's face.

"No, Dobby, I am not upset. I'm sure it will be fine," Harry reassured the elf. "I just didn't realize we would be using the ballroom is all."

"Misters Sirius, Severus, and Remus was worried you might be unhappy with all the arrangements and wanted to surprise you." Dobby wrung his hands nervously.

"Just how many people are coming to the reception?"

"We is having only one hundred. Mr. Tiberius was trying to keep it small for Miss Harry but there are some important people coming."

"Who Dobby?" she questioned firmly.

"Many from the Ministry and relatives of the Protectors and friends of Miss Harry's from school," Dobby replied flustered. His ears flapped worriedly as he looked at her expression. "Mrs. Wheezy was happy to help with the invitations."

"Oh. All right then I suppose it will be okay. I am just worried about paying for all this."

"Miss Harry doesn't have to worry," Winky piped up. "The reception is a wedding present for Miss Harry and Mr. Severus. Mr. Sirius is paying for it along with Mr. Tiberius."

"I see," Harry frowned. She was annoyed that no one had asked her what she wanted but couldn't see any way out of it other than eloping. She also didn't think that Severus would elope. He put too much stock in propriety and the social graces. Wizarding society could be rather stuffy at times.

"It will be loads of fun, Miss Harry, just like the ball at Hogwarts," Phaedra added giving Harry her best smile. "You will look so beautiful and you and Uncle Sev can dance that funny dance again."

"It was called the Tango and maybe we will," Harry answered with a half smile remembering how they had danced at the Yule ball. "Come on let's go and explore the dungeons."

"Ooo that sounds like fun," Phaedra replied racing for the door. "Can I put you in the shackles?"

"More likely I will put them on you," Harry countered following her out into the hall.

The door to the dungeons was cleverly hidden in the paneling behind a tapestry depicting a group of centaurs in battle. A narrow set of

stone stairs curved downwards. It was lit by magical torches, which went on as they descended. Most of the rooms were empty and barred holding various items that had been stored there. A few were locked and Harry supposed that whatever was in them was probably dangerous. A light was coming from one of the rooms at the end of the corridor and the girls headed towards it to see what was there. It proved to be a very well equipped Potions lab. Tiberius Snape was bending over one of the cauldrons stirring something. He looked up as they entered.

"Ahh...Harry, Phaedra, I see you are having fun learning your way around."

"We are exploring Uncle," Phaedra stated matter of factly. "What are you making?"

"I am brewing a special potion for Harry and Severus reception.

"What kind of potion?" Harry questioned anxiously.

"It is called Fantasy Bubbles," Tiberius laughed noting her anxiety. "I can assure you that it is quite harmless although I wouldn't recommend drinking it."

"What does it do? I don't think I studied that one."

"Watch," Tiberius arched his brow in amusement as he picked up a small metal rod with a hoop on one end. Dipping it into the potion, he extracted it with a wave. Just like the bubble solutions that Muggle children played with the room was filled with floating bubbles. The only difference was that these bubbles were in different shapes and colors, not clear. Harry noted there were stars, crescent moons, shamrocks, snowflakes, spirals, hearts, and flowers. Each bubble also showed an image with either Harry or Harry and her Protectors. Phaedra giggled excitedly while Harry grinned.

"This is so cool. They should teach this at Hogwarts."

"I doubt my nephew would even consider it. Perhaps in time you can convince him," Tiberius sighed.

"Why wouldn't Uncle Sev want to make bubbles? They're fun and pretty."

"He would say they are a waste of time. He thinks all his brewing should be for something useful or medicinal." Tiberius frowned shaking his head.

"Then we'll just have to convince him that this is useful too," Harry remarked green eyes glinting with mischief.

"What do you have in mind Harry?"

"Tiberius how were you planning on using this potion?"

"I thought that Phaedra could carry some before she preceded you down the aisle."

"Yeah, I can do that it will be fun!" Phaedra smiled jumping up and down.

"Sorry, Phaedra, but I have a better idea," Harry stated nodding her head thoughtfully. "Tiberius I just found out we will be using the ballroom. Will the doors to the gardens be opened too?"

"Yes and there will be flowers through out the ballroom itself. Why do you ask?"

"Then let's hide some of the bubbles throughout the gardens and the potted flowers. We can charm some cleverly hidden containers or pots to emit the bubbles at different intervals through out the evening. It's summer so that the sunset won't be till late anyway. This way everyone can enjoy them."

That is a brilliant idea Miss Harry."

"Hmm...I rather like it myself," Tiberius agreed. "I think it's time my nephew learned that potions which make people feel happy are among some of the strongest and most useful of them all."

"I agree. Severus can be too serious at times. He needs to remember the lighter side of life," Harry stated as Tiberius lips quirked up in a brief smile.

"By the way what happens if you drink this? It is harmful?"

"No," Tiberius chuckled. "All that happens is that bubbles will come out of your mouth and when they pop whatever you were trying to say will burst forth from them."

"Really...Can you set some of that aside for me? I know a few pranksters I would like to try it on." Harry wiggled her brows with a chuckle.

"It wouldn't be a certain werewolf and his animagus Soulmate now would it?"

"Let's just say they aren't the only ones coming that this will be fun to try on."

"I understand." Tiberius nodded knowing she was referring to the Weasley twins and some of her other friends. "I shall see that you get some. All you need is to put three drops in whatever they are drinking. It will take effect in less than five minutes."

"Miss Harry what are you going to do?"

"Shh...We are going to prank the pranksters but you can't say anything. It will be our secret."

"I promise I won't tell a soul." Phaedra beamed nodding her head vigorously. She was pleased that she was being included. "Can we help you to make the potion Uncle Tiberius?"

"Actually I think you would be more of a help by keeping your Uncle Severus from coming down to see what I am doing. We can't have him finding out now can we?"

"No but how can I keep him from coming down to your lab?"

"I believe he has gone into the village with Remus and Sirius to pick up some new dress robes for the ceremony."

"They left over an hour ago," Harry told him.

"Then they will probably be back shortly. When they arrive you need to keep Severus from coming downstairs. If I lock the door magically he will be suspicious that I am up to something unusual."

"Don't worry Uncle Tiberius. I can help Miss Harry to keep him busy somehow so he doesn't come down here."

"I think I know a way to keep him busy, Phaedra, how about if I give you a flying lesson? I know that Sirius will want to come and Remus may too. If you put on your best smile and plead with them they will all come along. Especially if you can get Sirius to challenge Sev into a game of pick up Quidditch. It could be me and Sev against the three of you." Harry was grinning wickedly at the little girl. She knew Phaedra could con the three men into their scheme magnificently.

"Right," Phaedra giggled brown eyes dancing. "Oh please Uncle can't you play with us?" she mimicked with a pout as she pretended to talk to the three wizards. "I don't think you and Miss Harry could beat us anyway."

Tiberius threw his head back with a loud laugh. "You my sweet little niece are a true Slytherin in the making. I do believe you could even con Dumbledore given the right opportunity."

"Come on Phaedra. Let's go and find the brooms. We can wait for your uncle and the others to get back over a game of exploding snap."

The two girls went upstairs where Harry retrieved her Firebolt and found Phaedra's training broom. They then went into the library to wait. The three wizards returned a short while later. Harry and Phaedra rushed out to greet them at the entrance to the castle.

"Uncle Sev," Phaedra greeted him with a smile, "can you come flying with us? Harry said we could all play Quidditch!" She waved her hands excitedly to indicate the other two wizards.

"I am afraid I will be unable to do so Phaedra," Severus replied putting down his packages and picking her up. "I was going to work on Lupin's Wolfsbane Potion and need to sort some of the ingredients I bought."

"Oh..." Phaedra's voice fell flat her lips curling in dismay.

"Nice going Severus. I think she's going to cry," Sirius belittled patting her on the back comfortingly.

"Phaedra, I merely want to get started on his potion. You know that it is a big help to his affliction and I am making some extra to send to the cab driver for his sister as I promised. Surely you can understand?"

"Yes Sir," she shrugged squirming down from his arms. "I just thought it would be fun to have you play too." She turned up the hall slumping her shoulders in disappointment dragging her broom behind her.

Harry watched the scene unfold with interest. 'Phaedra could win a BAFTA for her performance. She almost has me believing her too,' she mused before speaking aloud. "Phaedra don't you want to go flying anymore? I'm sure Sirius and Remus will come."

"Yeah, we want to go even if your uncle doesn't," Sirius said adamantly.

"I could teach you how to be a Keeper while Harry and Sirius try to score with the Quaffle," Remus offered with a kind smile.

"No...That's okay. It won't be any fun without Uncle Sev too."

"Severus I think you need to spend some time with Phaedra," Harry prodded. "She needs to know you're there for her."

"Harry is right Severus." Remus nodded with understanding. "My affliction as you so aptly put it will not take place for another week. You still have plenty of time to brew the potion."

"Remus is right. A few more hours won't make a difference," Sirius agreed. "It's not as if you've never brewed the potion before," he

added sarcastically. "Cheer up Phaedra. You can play with Padfoot. You know he really loves kids," Sirius remarked transforming. The huge black dog sidled up to her and nudged her with his nose before giving her a wet kiss on the cheek. He then sat up on his haunches and begged, pink tongue lolling out the side of his mouth. Phaedra couldn't suppress a giggle as Padfoot wagged his tail and nuzzled her playfully.

"Phaedra," Remus grinned, "I learned a long time ago that it is useless to try and dissuade Padfoot once his mind is made up. Isn't that right Harry?"

"Uh huh..." Harry had been watching the interaction between her godfather and Phaedra. She could feel a static charge building up inside of her. Apparently so could Remus who was eyeing her warily.

"Are you okay Princess?"

"What? Oh yeah, I was just thinking," Harry replied avoiding Remus' eyes. 'Sweet Merlin he realizes I'm getting jealous of a seven year old. I can't help it though,' she considered to herself. 'When I see how Sirius plays with her I realize how much I missed. I never got to be with him like that. It's just not fair.'

"Perhaps you would like to help me brew Lupin's potion Harry. I'm sure he and Black will be able to amuse Phaedra until we're done," Severus suggested interrupting her thoughts.

"No...Um...I think I'll just go upstairs for a while. I have a bit of a headache coming on."

"It's not your scar is it?" Remus asked anxiously his eyes darting towards her forehead.

"No. I think I'm just tired is all." Harry turned towards the grand staircase taking the steps two at a time. She didn't see Sirius transform watching her in confusion.

"What brought that on? She was fine a few minutes ago." Sirius looked at the others a puzzled frown creasing his forehead.

"I'll go up and see if she's all right Black. Why don't you and Lupin take Phaedra outside while I get Harry some headache potion? We'll be down in a few minutes."

"I should go up with you. Harry is..."

"Severus is right Padfoot. Harry will be fine," Remus interrupted grasping Sirius by the arm to keep him from following. His expression told Sirius that he would explain later.

"Does this mean we're all going flying?" Phaedra looked from one to the other.

"Yes, Phaedra, the potion can wait," Severus said mounting the stairs. "We will meet you outside shortly." He didn't wait to hear more. The portraits muttered amongst themselves as he moved swiftly past his mind in a whirl. 'Bloody hell Harry's upset and I'll be damned if I know why,' he mused. Stopping at the door to the room Harry and Phaedra shared he listened intently. Harry had failed to put up a silencing charm and he could hear muffled sobs coming from within. He was worried that Harry was beginning to feel that it was a mistake to marry him. 'It's Black she really loves,' a little voice nagged in the back of his head. 'She only agreed to marry you so that he and Lupin wouldn't be separated.' Shaking his head to try and dispel these thoughts he cautiously tried the knob. It turned with a light click and he entered soberly.

Harry looked up at the sound of the door. Wiping her eyes on her sleeve, she met Severus eyes. Her empathic senses were on full alert and she knew what he was feeling.

"Sev, it's not what you think."

"Oh and how do you know what I'm thinking?" he questioned. He had no sense of her attempting to enter his mind.

"I don't really. Legilimency would be useless and I would never try to invade your mind without permission. You know that I am an empath. I can feel your pain and distress. It hit me as soon as you came in."

"Indeed," he sneered arching his brow. "That still doesn't explain your statement about knowing my thoughts."

"Stop being so Snapeish Professor," Harry snapped irritably purposefully making reference to his former demeanor. "I'm not stupid. I can sense that you are worried that I'm not really in love with you!"

"Are you?" he asked dark eyes unfathomable.

"Severus," Harry began, standing up on the bed to bring herself even with his height, "you're my soul. Why are you so insecure when I get upset with Sirius?"

"I am more than aware of your affections towards your godfather," he answered looking into her bright green eyes.

Harry could feel his attempts to invade her mind and quirked her lips in a half smile.

"Sneaky Slytherin, you might just ask if you want to know what is bothering me."

"May I?" he questioned acerbically.

"If it will make you feel better," Harry sighed unoccluding that portion of her mind to grant him access. She knew no amount of arguing would reassure him over the incident in the hall. They both had serious trust issues and would need to work on them together.

"Harry," his soft voice apologized, "I should not have doubted you."

"And I shouldn't be jealous of a seven year old."

"No but I do understand. A part of you will always miss the childhood you could have had with Black."

"I know and I also realize that you will always have some animosity towards him but you need not be jealous of our relationship either. You are both very stubborn."

"We are trying to get along. Unfortunately your godfather..."

"Enough! I don't want to hear it. You're just two grown men who refuse to give up a stupid childhood grudge. Hell, I even get along better with Draco Malfoy than the two of you do. Sev, I love Sirius and Remus too but I'm in love with you. It really hurts me when I see you all bickering. You're acting like a couple of school boys."

"And just what do you call being jealous of a seven year old?"

"Stupid and foolish," Harry sighed putting her arms around his shoulders. "I really love Phaedra. She's a good kid."

"A bit mischievous at times though," he agreed wrapping his arms around her. "I think you're just reacting more to the stress of all the changes in your life right now due to your monthly hormone cycle," he whispered softly nibbling on her ear.

"Are you suggesting I have P.M.S.?"

"I believe that is the colloquial Muggle phrase." He arched his brow in amusement. "However, it does give you something in common with Lupin."

"What on earth does P.M.S. have to do with Remus?" she asked rolling her eyes.

"He is having his own symptoms as well. Black likes to refer to it as P.M.S. as well but in this instance the M stands for moon."

"That so sounds like Sirius' weird sense of humor," Harry laughed grinning.

"Feeling better now?"

"Yeah, are you?"

"Hmm..." Severus appeared thoughtful. "I think a kiss might just rectify any lingering doubts." His dark eyes were glittering in anticipation as he met her lips, tongue exploring the roof of her mouth with a brief passionate kiss. "That's better. Now I suggest we join the others before we start something that we can't finish."

"Who says we can't?" Harry demanded meeting his mouth again.

"I do my dear," he answered pulling back after a minute. "I swore a wizard's oath to your late father and will stand by my word," Severus sneered lifting her off the bed onto the floor.

"Thanks a lot dad," Harry snorted rolling her eyes towards heaven. "What's the matter didn't you think you could trust your little girl? I'm not that much like you."

"Actually, Harry, he believed you were very much like your mother."

"My mother was a saint." She tossed her head.

"Was she?" He threw his head back emitting one of his rare laughs. "Then why do you suppose he had us swear that oath? You are more like her than you will ever know."

"Will you come flying with us?" Harry was unable to keep the flush from creeping up her cheeks as she hurriedly changed the subject.

Severus nodded, his lips still quirked in a smile, as they headed from the room. He summoned his broom from the hallway and they made their way down stairs. They found the others out back. Sirius was shooting the Quaffle towards the hoops while Phaedra tried to block him under Remus' direction.

"Hey you two what took so long?" Sirius called.

"Are you feeling better Harry?" Remus asked coming down to land with Phaedra and Sirius.

"Yes I was just tired. It was nothing Severus couldn't handle."

"Good, now maybe we can get a game going," Sirius piped in jovially.

"How do you want to play?" Remus inquired.

"Let's teach Phaedra all the positions except for Beater. I think she's a little young for that one yet."

"I am not!"

"Are so!" they all stated in unison breaking up into laughter.

"Phaedra the position requires you to hit the bludger with a bat while flying. It takes strength and good flying skills neither of which you have yet achieved," Severus explained gently. "I think we should let the snitch go and all have a try at catching it."

"Great idea Sev," Sirius beamed, "it will give Phaedra some flying time and help to hone her eye to hand skills too."

"I'll fly with Phaedra since you three are more likely to be doing fast acrobatics," Remus ventured nervously.

"Sounds good to me Moony," Sirius snickered knowing that Remus did not like flying much. "Let's go then!" Sirius took to the air while Severus took the snitch out and released it.

"I'm right behind you Padfoot," Harry called happily. She relished the feel of the sun on her back and the wind in her hair as she circled and then flew over to Remus and Phaedra.

"Miss Harry how do you catch that little ball? I don't see it anywhere."

"Ah...that's the best part of the game. Whoever catches the snitch usually wins the game. You get one hundred and fifty points for the team but you have to wait and watch for it. Then fly like a banshee."

"I heard Mr. Sirius say that you could have played for a major team instead of being a teacher."

"That's right Phaedra," Remus told her. "Harry could have been a professional Seeker but she didn't want to."

"But you would have been famous!"

"Phaedra I already am famous. You know that and it's not what people think."

"I don't understand."

"What Harry is trying to say is that she gets no privacy and people expect more from her already. If she had played Quidditch they would always expect her to win and would never let her alone," Remus explained.

"Isn't it fun being famous?"

"No not always. Sometimes when people are nice it's okay but usually they try to grab me and say things or ask for favors I can't give them. They also write bad things in the paper when I do something they don't like," Harry said ruefully.

"Miss Harry do you think I can catch the snitch?"

"You have as good a chance as any one of us. You just have to not let us know when you see it and then go for it." Harry encouraged her. "I want you to be careful though you aren't used to flying."

"I will. Come on Mr. Remus let's find that ball!" She flew off with Remus right behind her. Fortunately, she was on a slow training broom and Harry could see she was doing well.

"Any luck yet?" Harry asked flying up to pace Severus who was pacing Sirius.

"Even if I saw the snitch I wouldn't say," Severus answered cockily.

"Tsk, tsk," Sirius teased over his shoulder, "having a lover's quarrel over a snitch which I'm going to catch anyway." He suddenly flew off and took a mad dive in an attempt to fool them but it failed and he flew back up.

"Really, Black, did you actually believe either of us would fall for such a foolish trick?"

"I was hoping." He grinned cheekily. Just then, Severus spotted the snitch and raced off to the left. Sirius followed right behind him.

Harry just shook her head and let her eyes follow the erratic movement of the little gold ball. That's when she spotted Phaedra and Remus. The little girl was flying in the direction of her uncle.

While her broom was slow, she was pushing it too fast. Remus was trying to slow her down yelling at her to stop but she swerved out of his reach. She did not see her uncle and Sirius turn sharply as the snitch darted down closer to her. They would not be able to stop in time and would collide with the little girl before Remus would be able to grab her. She pushed the Firebolt in their direction yelling frantically but her voice was lost in the wind. If she moved too fast she would hit them all too. Thinking fast she decided to transform into her Phoenix.

She had never attempted to do a Phoenix apparition and didn't know if it was possible. She vaguely remembered either McGonagall or Dumbledore saying it wasn't but she had to try. Just as she transformed the group collided. Remus had somehow managed to grab hold of Phaedra but lost control of his broom. They were spinning wildly towards the ground. Sirius had grabbed onto Severus whose broom had snapped and he was trying to help him onto his broom while he attempted to get to the others. Harry closed her eyes and prayed. She found herself beside Remus barely ten feet before they hit the ground and her sharp talons grabbed onto his collar. Her wings beat furiously as she tried to maneuver with the awkward load but she managed to lower the man and child without injury. Sirius and Severus reached them a moment later as she returned to human form.

"Phaedra are you all right?" Severus asked frantically examining the terrified child for any injuries.

"Moony you had me scared half to death!" Sirius exclaimed grabbing hold of his friend who was shaking in shock.

"I really thought we had had it," Remus admitted. "Is Phaedra all right?"

"She's fine just shaken up a bit," Severus responded as he rubbed her back soothingly. "Thank you Remus."

"Don't thank me. Thank Harry. If she hadn't gotten hold of us I shudder to think what shape we would be in."

"How did you manage that honey? I didn't think you were able to disapparate like that too." Sirius studied her in amazement. "One minute you were on your broom and the next you disappeared in a flash of fire and reappeared beside Remus."

"According to Dumbledore and Minerva I shouldn't be able to. I just knew I had to try."

"Well I am glad you did," Moony praised her getting up from the ground to give her a hug. "Well done Harry. I am really proud of you."

"We all are," Severus remarked quietly.

"I think we should notify the Headmaster of this. He will find it most interesting," Remus stated thoughtfully.

"I think it was wonderful," Phaedra sobbed softly still hugging Severus. "Miss Harry that's the second time you saved me from falling."

"I hope, Phaedra, that you have learned to listen when Remus tells you to stop. You could have been killed!" Harry admonished. "You scared us all. Not to mention what might have happened if Sirius hadn't been able to get hold of your uncle." Harry was angry with Phaedra and while she wasn't yelling, the child was aware that she was being disciplined.

"I'm sorry Miss Harry. I saw the snitch and wanted to show you that I could fly good enough to really play."

"Oh Baby, you're not ready yet. Flying like that takes practice, even for me," Harry relented seeing the tears spring back into Phaedra's eyes.

"I think Phaedra understands that now," Severus interceded.

"Yes Uncle Severus. I will listen to Mr. Remus, you and Mr. Sirius from now on when we're all flying. Miss Harry told me to be careful but..."

"No buts Phaedra. Flying is fun but it can be dangerous. Now promise me you will not do such a thing again because if you do I am taking the broom away."

"Can she do that Uncle Sev?"

"Phaedra, Harry is bound to me and we are to be married. She is in effect your aunt so yes, she can."

"Aren't you all bound with the...the...Protectship?"

"That's Protectorship and yes we are," Harry answered.

"Does that make Mr. Sirius and Mr. Remus my uncles too?"

"If you want us to be it does." Sirius smiled tussling her blond curls.

"I do. Now I have an Aunt Harry, Uncle Sirius and an Uncle Remus!"

"Ouch that hurt," Remus snickered and Harry giggled.

"Don't you want to be my uncle?" she questioned while Sirius and Severus looked bewildered.

"Yes, Phaedra, I do. Harry and I are laughing over a Muggle thing. It is a character in a Muggle story is all."

"Maybe you should say Uncle Moony," Harry laughed winking at Remus.

"What are you two on about?" Sirius demanded.

"I'll explain it later Padfoot. I think for now though we should go get cleaned up and have something to eat. The girls have a busy day tomorrow."

"Are we still going...um...Aunt Harry?"

"Yup but you will promise to stay out of trouble won't you?"

"I promise."

"Good cause if you don't you will find out all about Mrs. Weasley's temper. She even scares your Uncle Sev!" The group laughed at the scowl on Phaedra's face as she considered this information and they all headed back into the castle.

Despite the excitement of the afternoon Harry was glad everyone was safe and that Phaedra would now be calling her Aunt Harry. Tomorrow would be a wonderful day and Harry couldn't wait to spend the day with her friends. She suspected Mrs. Weasley would also have a good time helping them all pick out their new robes too. Harry had finally started to relax after the past few months blissfully unaware that trouble was once again looming on the horizon.

Part 3

Hexes and Hounds

The following morning Phaedra woke Harry with a shake to her shoulders. It was sticky and humid the clouds hanging gray in the sky. There was no breeze coming in from the open window giving Harry an anxious feeling in the pit of her stomach. It was as if the world was waiting. Phaedra however was unaffected by the oppressive atmosphere as she shook Harry from a restless sleep.

“Come on, Aunt Harry, get up! We’re going to Diagon Alley today!”

“What time is it?” Harry mumbled, pulling the pillow over her face.

“It’s half past eight,” Phaedra answered proudly. She remembered how Harry had taught her to tell time two years ago. “We have to meet Mrs. Weasley in an hour and a half so uncle said to come and wake you up.”

“He did, did he? Is that all he said?”

“No. He also said you were as lazy as the Gryffindor Lion and that you were late to Potions more times than he could count.”

“He said that?” Harry gasped, sitting up.

“Yup, then Uncle Sirius hexed him.”

“Oh Merlin, what did Sirius do to him?”

“Turned him into a kneazle.” Phaedra blinked, tossing her blond curls.

“What! Lord I had better get down there!” Harry jumped from the bed, fumbling for her glasses on the nightstand.

“It’s okay. Uncle Moony is keeping Padfoot away from him.”

“You mean Sirius transformed?”

“Uh huh. Then he started chasing Uncle Sev.”

“Oh no...” Harry groaned pulling clothes from the closet.

“I told you it was okay. Uncle Moony is taking care of Padfoot.”

“What do you mean taking care of Padfoot?”

“Well...” Phaedra shifted from foot to foot. “When they started running all over the dining room Uncle Moony tried to stop them but Uncle Tiberius told him that they needed to just battle it out. He said something about systems that I didn’t understand.”

“Did he say getting it out of their systems?”

“Yes, once and for all.” Phaedra nodded vigorously. “That’s it! What does it mean?”

“It means if they beat the crap out of each other they’ll finally realize how much they actually have in common.”

“Oh...right,” Phaedra replied still somewhat puzzled. “Anyway they really made a mess. The house elves are all upset.”

“What did they do?”

“Uncle Sev ran over the table and Padfoot tried to follow him. Dishes are all broken and everything.” Phaedra waved her arms, wide eyed. “Padfoot cornered him under the china cabinet.”

“Oh no...Is he all right?”

“Who, Uncle Sev or Padfoot?”

“Both.”

“I guess so. Uncle Sev scratched Padfoot on the nose and made a dash over to the drapes. He managed to climb them but the rod fell down. He landed on Padfoot’s back and clawed him up pretty bad. Sirius went crazy. He managed to flip Uncle Sev off but he bounced off the wall. His kneazle tail is kind of bent and he keeps shaking his head. He’s sitting on Uncle Tiberius’ lap growling at Padfoot.”

“Where is Padfoot?”

"Uncle Moony is holding him by the collar."

"You mean he didn't change back yet?"

"Not unless he did since I came to wake you up."

"Come on Phaedra," Harry said pulling on her shoes. "We have to stop this." Harry sped from the bedroom with Phaedra following on her heels. "I can't believe I slept through all that noise."

"Uncle Moony says the walls are thick cause it's a castle," Phaedra panted from behind.

"Umm...He's probably right," Harry agreed, as she flew down the stairs.

Entering the ravaged dining room, she stopped short. There were broken dishes and food everywhere. The tablecloth was hanging half off the table and the drapes lay in a tangled heap on the floor, the rod all askew. Remus was holding tightly onto Padfoot, the unnatural strength from his lycanthrope keeping the large black dog from pulling free. Padfoot had a bloody nose and his back had several deep gashes where the kneazle had raked his claws. He whined balefully at Harry. Looking over towards Tiberius she saw the large black kneazle and assumed it was the transformed Severus. The kneazle was curled on his lap, emitting low growls from deep within its throat, as he stared over at Padfoot. The kneazle's tail was bent at an odd angle and blood oozed from his left paw, where he had raked the dog's back, losing a few claws in the process. Harry wondered if they were still in Sirius' back.

"Good morning Harry. You've missed all the excitement," Tiberius chuckled wickedly. "As you can see my nephew and your godfather have started quarrelling again. I am afraid they have made quite a mess of things too."

"Aside from Severus saying I was lazy, what else set them off?" Harry glared at the two animals, her voice steely.

"Well...Severus saying that you were lazy was just the tip of the iceberg. It actually started earlier. It...uh..." Remus shifted uncomfortably.

"Spit it out Remus. What triggered their tempers this time?"

"I did." Remus flushed looking down at the table absently fingering Padfoot's collar.

"You did? What are you talking about?"

"It started over my lycanthrope." Remus shifted uncomfortably as Padfoot whined, placing his large black head on Remus' knee.

"My nephew set up a room in the dungeon for Remus to use during his transformations when the moon is full," Tiberius explained logically.

"Sirius got mad and made a nasty remark about Severus not making the Wolfsbane potion properly," the werewolf sighed.

"Did you know Sev had done this?"

"We had discussed it briefly as a precautionary measure. I was concerned about Phaedra. I didn't know Severus had followed up on it so I never mentioned it to Sirius. He lost his temper when Sev mentioned it over breakfast, just as he asked Phaedra to wake you up. When he said you were a lazy Gryffindor I think he was just being his usual self and trying to annoy Sirius but that was the final straw. You know how much he cares about you and his pride wouldn't let him see that it was just Severus dry sense of humor."

"Clearly there has been one hell of a misunderstanding here," Harry said looking from one to the other. 'Merlin, I'm starting to sound like Dumbledore,' she thought ruefully. "Padfoot I want you to change back this instant and take that spell off of Severus," Harry instructed trying to remain calm. "Remus you are not responsible for this. There is no need for you to feel guilty. In fact, I'm proud of you for thinking of Phaedra's safety." Harry gently patted Remus on the shoulder as Sirius transformed.

“Harry I...”Sirius began.

“Not now Sirius! Turn Sev back this instant!” she snapped sharply.

Sirius nodded, pointing his wand at the irate kneazle, while Tiberius set him back down on the floor. Severus reappeared with an angry scowl.

“Black you have gone too far. You are an arro...”

“Shut up!” Harry yelled, angrily balling her fists. Her green eyes flashed as she shut them and the china rattled as a cup flew across the table. ‘Breathe. Take slow deep breaths and count to ten,’ she told herself. ‘Don’t lose control now.’ Opening her eyes, she found that Remus was smiling at her.

“Very nice, Princess, you were controlling your anger and keeping your magic in check admirably. The Headmaster would be proud of you.”

“I’m trying, Moony, but it isn’t easy.”

“Just the same, Dumbledore would be pleased to see that you were able to keep your emotions from causing you to lose control of your magic,” Tiberius agreed.

“Thanks,” Harry replied, giving Tiberius a brief smile to acknowledge his praise before directing her attention back to the two angry wizards. “As for the two of you I will say this only once. If you cannot get along then I will leave. I don’t care about the Ministry’s decree regarding the Protectorship. I will simply leave the country and there will be no rites. I can’t have people I care about going off and acting like children over some stupid old grudges.”

“Honey, you don’t understand. I was only looking out for you and Moony. Severus should not have said those things about you and he might have mentioned the room to me before going ahead and doing it,” Sirius explained.

“I do understand, Sirius, but as usual you jumped in and acted without thinking. You let your temper get the better of you.”

"Humph..." Sirius snorted with a twitch of his lips as his goddaughter rebuked him.

"And you can just wipe off that smirk. It isn't funny. If I had done something like that you would have been furious," Harry admonished, turning towards Severus. "I am just as angry with you. You are old enough to have ignored Sirius' remarks about the Wolfsbane potion. All you had to do was ask Sirius to calm down and give Remus a chance to explain. I also do not appreciate you making jokes about me having been late to class. If I recall correctly, I cleaned more than my share of cauldrons to make up for any of the times I came in late. Nor am I lazy."

"I apologize Harry." Severus nodded cowed. "It was inconsiderate of me to joke about your classes with me without you being here to defend yourself."

"Now I meant what I said. I care a great deal for all three of you but this rivalry has to stop. Your childish attitudes are getting way out of hand. It is killing me. Whenever you're angry or hurt with one another I can feel those emotions acutely. I can't block them as strongly as those of other people. I think it is due to the blood bond we all share. When you guys get out of control it wreaks havoc with my empathy. If I have to I will leave. It would be better than being torn apart like this." Harry was shaking visibly. As she spoke, her green eyes were wet with unshed tears.

"Harry..." Severus and Sirius said in unison as they each stepped over to her.

"You're right to be angry. I lost it with Severus and I shouldn't have acted so irrationally. I didn't mean to hurt you honey," Sirius stated regretfully, as he cupped her chin.

"I also acted irresponsibly," Severus agreed. "I should have consulted your godfather about Lupin's idea before I acted on it." He placed a hand on her shoulder. "I love you, Harry, as do Black and Lupin. As your protectors we have all failed."

"I don't understand. How did you fail?"

"What Severus is trying to say is that we didn't protect you from the pain we inadvertently inflicted upon you," Remus stated quietly. "Our arguments hurt you worse than Voldemort's mind games ever did."

"It will take work but we promise to do better," Severus remarked offering his hand to Sirius."

"It's about time we started acting like responsible adults. I apologize Severus," Sirius said as they shook hands.

"All right then," Harry beamed, "why don't you two go and clean up those wounds before they become infected and then we can finish breakfast."

"Good idea. I'm starved." Sirius grinned.

"Come on, Black, I have some potions and salves that will work quite nicely."

The two wizards left the room. Harry shook her head in disbelief while Remus studied the ceiling. Tiberius simply arched his brow displaying the characteristic Snape sneer. Phaedra, who had been silent during the entire time, looked at them all perplexed.

"Does this mean you are still going to marry Uncle Sev? You're not going to go away are you?"

"No, Phaedra, I am not going away and yes, I am still going to marry your uncle."

"Good." She shook her head with relief. "Now can we go shopping?"

"Just as soon as we all finish eating," Harry responded, giving her a quick hug. "Dobby could you and Winky help to clean up this mess and get us some more food?" Harry called.

"Dobby and Winky will be most pleased to clean up," he answered, appearing with a loud pop, Winky beside him. "Mr. Sirius and Mr. Severus were not being very good wizards to do this!"

"No, Dobby, they weren't," Remus laughed. "I would suggest you get used to their tempers though. I suspect it will take some more time before they really become friends."

"They are being stubborn Mr. Remus. Sirius and Severus are both good wizards and will do anything to make Miss Harry Potter happy."

"Yes, Dobby, I believe they will," Tiberius agreed, as the elves swiftly repaired the damaged china and put the room back in order. They then disappeared with a pop and a few minutes later fresh food appeared on the table.

"Any bets on how long the truce will last this time?" Harry questioned, while Remus poured out the tea and Tiberius passed around a plate of scrambled eggs and bacon.

"I think they will try harder this time Princess."

"Remus is right." Tiberius nodded. "You shouldn't be so skeptical since they both have one very important thing in common which will help them to see how much they are alike."

"Such as?" Harry looked up curiously.

"You Harry!" Tiberius and Remus replied in unison.

"Aunt Harry, how come uncles Sev and Sirius always fight?"

"Because they're both too stubborn to admit they really like and respect one another Phaedra. So they keep trying to show each other up."

"Oh..." Phaedra answered, tilting her head thoughtfully. "That's silly. They're both good at magic. I hope I will be as good as them when I can do magic."

"I am sure you will be." Tiberius smiled fondly at his young niece. "Now how would you like some money of your own to spend today?"

"Really?" Phaedra's eyes grew wide with excitement. "I can have some money to buy something?"

"I think it could be arranged. After all, your new Aunt is treating you to a day out, so I thought I would too." Tiberius lips quirked in amusement. "I think it is time you learned how to handle money of your own. Wouldn't you say so Harry?"

"I think that is a wonderful idea."

"I believe that ten galleons should be enough. You can buy yourself something special." He reached into his robes and withdrew the coins. "Do you have a purse to put it in?"

"Yes uncle," she responded taking the money. "Thank you. I'll be right back Aunt Harry. I have to get my purse. Don't leave without me!" Phaedra called over her shoulder, darting from the room.

"That's an awful lot of money for a seven year old," Harry remarked.

"Perhaps, but I will be most curious to see how she spends it."

"I think Phaedra may just surprise you Tiberius. She is a very bright and thoughtful little girl." Remus pursed his lips thoughtfully as Sirius and Severus returned.

"I see the two of you have healed your wounds up nicely," Tiberius remarked as they sat down.

"Yes. That salve that Severus gave me works wonders. I will have to get some for Moony."

"It is made with Murtlap, Aloe and Bicorn horn ground into a fine powder," Severus informed them. "It is similar to one that I give to Lupin already. It is in a more potent form to help heal his wounds following some of his more debilitating transformations."

"Ah yes." The werewolf nodded. "You know the one Padfoot. It is in the brass tin." Sirius shook his head with understanding as he took a mouth full of eggs.

"Is it time to go yet?" Phaedra asked breathlessly as she ran back into the room clutching her purse.

“What have you got there Phaedra?” Sirius inquired.

“Uncle Tiberius gave me ten galleons to buy something special.”

“What are you going to get? That is an awful lot of money.”

“I don’t know yet Uncle Sirius. I will look around and then decide. Maybe I can get something from Mr. Fred and George’s joke shop.” Severus rolled his eyes while Sirius laughed.

“Why not buy yourself some new books?” Remus interjected before Sirius could give her any ideas for prank items.

“Maybe. I like to read.”

“Just don’t let Hermione keep you too long in Flourish and Blotts. She’ll have you buying out the store,” Harry teased.

“Can I get a wand?”

“No,” they all answered at once.

“You are too young yet Phaedra,” Severus told her gently. “You are not allowed a wand until you are going to Hogwarts.”

“That won’t be for almost four years,” Phaedra pouted with a sigh.

“Maybe we can get you a play wand. Even if it doesn’t work we could all show you some of the wand movements you will learn later on with it,” Harry suggested.

“Really? Will you all teach me then?”

“If you behave yourself we will show you some of them. If we show you too much you will be so far ahead when you get to Hogwarts you won’t want to go,” Tiberius told her amused.

“I will so! I’ll bet it’s loads of fun. I saw the first years when we stayed there and they all seemed so happy to be learning the magic.”

"Well, I hate to interrupt this talk of Hogwarts, but I think it is time we got going," Harry said wiping her mouth with a napkin, rising from her chair.

"Phaedra I expect you to listen to what Harry and Mrs. Weasley tell you while you are out," Severus instructed.

"I will uncle Sev," Phaedra agreed, taking hold of Harry's hand and tugging her towards the fireplace.

"Have a good day, Harry," Sirius winked, "and while you're there please try to stay out of mischief."

"Humph...I'm not the one you need to worry about," she giggled, glancing down at Phaedra.

"Say hello to Molly and the others for us Princess."

"I will Remus."

"Harry why don't you go first and I then I will send Phaedra through," Severus suggested, holding out the tin of floo powder.

"Okay. Phaedra do you know where we are going to meet the Weasleys?"

"The Burrow," she answered clearly.

"Right then. I will meet you on the other side." Harry stepped into the fireplace. "The Burrow!" she yelled throwing down the powder and disappearing into the green flames. Phaedra followed suit a moment later. As Harry spun rapidly towards her destination she hoped that Phaedra would not get lost but rationalized that the child was used to using the floo system. Yet, she still could not shake the feelings of anxiety that she had woken up with that morning.

Chapter 4

Girls Day Out

Harry exited the floo system in the living room of the Burrow. Brushing herself off, she was greeted by the cheerful voice of Molly Weasley.

“Hello, Harry dear, how are you?” Molly bustled over, enveloping her into a bear hug.

“I’m fine, Mrs. Weasley. It’s good to see you again.” Harry smiled, returning the hug. They turned at the sound of a soft thud.

“Ouch!” Phaedra proclaimed. She had just come from the floo and was sitting on the floor, having landed on her buttocks.

“Are you okay?” Harry laughed, helping her up.

“Yeah,” she giggled blushing as Mrs. Weasley brushed off her robes.

“Hello, Phaedra, are you excited about our shopping trip?” Molly smiled fondly.

“Yes, Mrs. Weasley. My uncle Tiberius gave me some money to buy something special today!”

“That’s lovely dear. Do you know what you want to buy yourself?”

“Not yet, but maybe you can help me? My uncle says I have to learn how to handle money.”

“Of course I’ll help,” Mrs. Weasley replied, pleased that the child had asked. “How much did he give you?”

“Ten galleons.”

“Oh my, that is a good deal of money for a little girl.” Molly Weasley shook her head.

“That’s what everyone else said too.”

"I think I'll just let your uncle know that you arrived safely," Harry stated, noting the look on Molly's face. She knew that Molly had always been frugal due to necessity while raising her seven children. The thought of Phaedra having ten galleons had to be more than a little disconcerting.

"That's a good idea Harry. I'm sure they would like to know." Molly nodded, wiping her hands on her apron.

"Snape Castle, Severus Snape," Harry said throwing a pinch of powder into the hearth. A moment later Severus head appeared in the green flames.

"Is everything all right Harry?"

"Yes. I just wanted to let you know that Phaedra got here safely."

"I had no doubt that she wouldn't," Severus sneered. "Hello Molly," he addressed the older woman who had come to stand beside Harry. "I hope your family are all well."

"Yes, Severus, we're all doing fine and looking forward to the wedding. With all the dreadful events of the past few years it's time we all looked forward to having some fun."

"Uncle Severus, Mrs. Weasley said she will help me to pick out something to buy!" Phaedra called.

"Indeed. Then I know you will spend your money wisely." He arched his brows in amusement. "Did you have any problems with the floo?"

"I landed on my bum," she remarked, rubbing her backside. "I forgot to bend my knees when I landed." Mrs. Weasley smiled and Harry couldn't suppress a chuckle. "It's not funny, Aunt Harry," she pouted.

"I'm sorry, Phaedra, but I used to have the same problem." Harry hugged her, playfully patting her bottom. "I usually landed flat on my back though and slid across the floor. I was more than grateful to Professor Dumbledore when he taught me how to apparate."

"Uncle Sev did you ever land on your bum too?"

"That question shall remain unanswered, Phaedra, as it is none of your business." He looked at his niece stoically.

"I'll bet he did," Phaedra whispered to Harry who rolled her eyes.

"Ladies I shall leave you now to your business. Have a good day," Severus remarked before disappearing from the flames as they all burst out laughing.

"Where is Ginny?" Harry questioned getting control of herself. "I would have thought she would have come down to greet us by now."

"She is over at Ron and Hermione's. I expect she and Hermione will be here any minute," Molly answered. "How about a cup of tea while we wait?"

"Okay." Harry and Phaedra followed Molly into the kitchen. Molly poured out the tea and settled Phaedra at the table with a glass of milk and some biscuits.

"So, Harry, are you excited?" the older woman queried.

"I suppose so." She shrugged.

"What's wrong dear? You don't seem as happy as you should be."

"I feel like I've had no say in this whole thing. I didn't even go over the guest list."

"Oh dear," Molly sighed. "I suppose that's my fault. With all you have been through, I rather took over as Mother of the Bride. I'm sorry. I should have spoken to you first."

"That's all right Mrs. Weasley. It was kind of you to think of me."

"Now, Harry, you know we all think of you as a member of the family." Molly patted her hand affectionately.

"Is it all right if I see the guest list? It's okay if you don't want me too though. I'm sure you invited all my friends and I trust your judgment. I know that you wanted me to not have to worry about everything."

Harry looked at Molly, green eyes smiling with gratitude, not wanting her to feel as if she had done something wrong.

"There is no reason not to show you the list. I should have consulted you about it anyway. I was just so excited and happy. I didn't want to burden you with any more worries than you have already had." Molly rose from the table, picking up her wand from the counter; she summoned a sheaf of papers from the living room with a quick flick of the wrist. "Here you go dear. I hope everything is okay. There is still time to invite anyone I may have missed," Molly stated. Resuming her seat beside Harry at the table, she waited while the younger witch prepared to review the list of names.

"I'm sure you did a wonderful job, Molly." Harry beamed, yet her empathic sense was picking up a brief feeling of anxiety emanating from the older woman. Scanning the list, she read down the page, a smile curving the corners of her mouth. Most of the guests were school friends, Hogwarts faculty, Order members, and relatives of her protectors, along with various Ministry officials. She stopped abruptly when she reached the bottom of the page. Gasping, Harry looked up in astonishment, her green eyes reflecting shock and disbelief. The last names listed were the Dursleys.

"I'm sorry, Harry. I just thought that as your only living blood relatives that they should be invited. I know I should have asked you first but I really didn't believe that they would come."

"You mean Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon have accepted the invitation?" Harry inquired dumbfounded.

"Yes, along with your cousin Dudley. They only recently came back from New Zealand. Dumbledore told me that your uncle's company has been downsized and they had to come home. Your cousin lost his job completely and your uncle's division was cut in half. They are back on Privet Drive." Molly wrung her hands nervously as Harry continued to stare at her in disbelief. "You aren't angry at me for inviting them?" she queried fretfully, unable to hide her chagrin.

"No...no, Mrs. Weasley," Harry lied. "I'm just surprised they accepted."

"Well...perhaps your Aunt Petunia and her husband have come to realize what a wonderful person you are. I'm sure they must feel terribly guilty over the way they treated you. It's not unheard of to have a change of heart."

"Maybe, you can never tell with the Dursleys." Harry shrugged, biting back her anger. 'Change of heart my ass,' she mused. 'They can't be trusted despite what Molly may think. I just hope they don't cause a scene. I'm sure they're up to something.'

"Harry! Phaedra!" Hermione's voice exclaimed excitedly, interrupting Harry's thoughts as she dashed into the kitchen. "How have you been? Have you been here long?" The bushy haired girl greeted, enveloping her into a massive hug.

"It's great to see you, Harry," Ginny Weasley remarked with a grin, following Hermione into the kitchen. "How have you been, Phaedra?"

"I landed on my bum coming through the floo. Your mummy gave me some cookies so now I feel much better," she giggled.

"Hey guys it's wonderful to see you again. How does Ron like married life, Hermione?"

"His only complaint is that he hasn't been getting enough sleep," she blushed.

"Really and why is that?" Harry feigned innocence.

"You know darn well why, Harry Potter," Hermione laughed, her color deepening, "So don't take that innocent expression with me."

"She's keeping him really happy these days," Ginny added, continuing the teasing.

"It could be the other way around too," Harry laughed. "Just don't tire him out too much with his husbandly duties."

"Ahem," Molly cleared her throat, glancing over at Phaedra.

"What are husbandly duties, Aunt Harry?"

"Ah...taking out the garbage," Harry answered trying to think of a quick answer.

"Yes, and helping to do any repairs around the house," Hermione continued in a rush.

"And making sure Hermione stays happy and contented," Ginny added with a hint of mischief, nudging her sister-in-law.

"Girls, I do believe we should be on our way," Molly Weasley interceded before the teasing got out of hand. "I'm sure Phaedra has been looking forward to this trip for days. I know my own brood always loved a day at Diagon Alley." Molly took Phaedra by the hand and steered the group towards the fireplace. "I am sure we'll all have a wonderful day even though it does look like rain."

"I know we will," Ginny agreed. "I can't wait to go to the beauty salon and get my new dress robes."

"Now Ginny, do not get carried away. It was very nice of Harry to offer to get you new robes for the wedding."

"It is no problem, Mrs. Weasley. You are all my family and I want you to be happy. Besides, I cannot wait to see Draco's face when he sees Ginny all dressed up. You never know he may even propose, Gin," Harry chuckled, nudging her friend.

"Yeah Gin, I've seen how he ogles over you now. Just wait till he sees you all dressed up. You'll knock him dead," Hermione laughed.

"I hope so," Ginny stated good-naturedly.

"Miss Ginny, why do you want to kill Draco?" Phaedra asked in consternation.

"No Phaedra, it is an expression that means he will be stunned to see how good I look."

"Miss Ginny, you always look good."

"Thank you, Phaedra."

"Come along then, girls." Molly handed them all some floo powder from the canister on the mantle. "I'll go first and then you can send in Phaedra. We'll go to the Leaky Cauldron and make our way up the alley from there," Molly directed. They nodded in understanding before Molly disappeared into the flames, each following in succession.

"Hi Tom!" Harry waved to the innkeeper as she exited the floo and dusted herself off.

"Great to see you again, Harry. Everything all right?"

"Never better!" She grinned, following the others out towards the brick wall. Molly tapped the bricks in the way Harry was shown by Hagrid when she first visited Diagon Alley when she was eleven and they walked into the crowded street.

"Aren't you nervous you'll be recognized, Harry?" Ginny questioned. Her friends knew she didn't like the notoriety.

"I'll just deal with it. My scar is barely visible now that Voldemort is finally vanquished and my hair is long."

"You should have worn your contact lenses," Ginny commented.

"I have them with me in my purse. If too many people cause a scene I'll put them in."

"Harry needs to get used to all the publicity now anyway," Hermione remarked. "She is a grown woman and there will always be someone asking questions about what happened."

"You're right, Mione, as usual. I just wish they would not be so overly zealous about it."

"Aunt Harry, I think it would be fun to have everybody wanting to meet you."

"Unfortunately, Phaedra, that is not the case," Hermione explained knowingly. "People want to know Harry the celebrity and don't get to know the real person. It makes them feel important."

"Yes, and they make up all kinds of nonsense about you too." Ginny nodded in understanding.

"And it often is not very nice," Harry agreed.

"That's mean," Phaedra stated, frowning.

"Yes dear it is, but some people just want to get the attention," Molly snorted. "Now where do you all think we should start our little shopping spree?"

"How about if we go and get our wedding clothes fitted first. Then we can head on over to the beauty parlor. After that it should be time for lunch," Harry commented.

"I think that sounds fine." Molly led the group towards Madam Malkin's as they all chatted excitedly amongst themselves.

"Hello ladies," the bustling shopkeeper greeted them as they entered.
"What can I do for you today?"

"We all need dress robes for an upcoming wedding," Molly said taking charge.

"Of course. Is it formal or semi?"

"Formal," Harry answered stepping from behind Mrs. Weasley.

"Harry Potter! It is good to see you again. I take it you are the bride?"

"Yeah." Harry nodded, her cheeks coloring.

"The whole wizarding world is talking about it, Miss Potter. It is the biggest event since the marriage between Narcissa Black and Lucius Malfoy. The only thing more talked about was your taking care of You-Know-Who."

"His name was Voldemort," Harry remarked quietly, watching as the others winced at her use of the Dark Lord's name.

"Yes, well...have you decided if you want a full witch's bridal outfit, or a dress in the Muggle style?" Madam Malkin inquired changing the

subject to avoid any further discomfort and possibly lose Harry's business.

"I honestly haven't given it much thought. What do you all think?"

"I think you should wear full wedding robes," Ginny commented.

"No, Gin, Harry should wear the traditional Muggle wedding dress," Hermione countered.

"Some help the both of you are!" Harry grinned good-naturedly. "I think we will go with both. The rest of my family will also be needing outfits in which ever fashion they prefer." She waved her hand in the direction of the others.

"Then I shall show you all of our selections. We can also custom tailor to your desires too."

"That won't be necessary, Madam Malkin," Molly spoke up quickly. "It will be far too expensive."

"Don't listen to her, Mrs. Malkin," Harry quipped. "I will be paying for all of their garments." Harry gave Mrs. Weasley a challenging look, placing her hands on her hips. This did not deter the older witch from trying to dissuade her however.

"Harry that is most kind of you but it really isn't necessary."

"Yes, Mum, it is." Harry looked at Mrs. Weasley over her glasses. "It will mean a lot to me. You are the only family I truly had growing up and I want to do something special for you."

"But Harry..."

"No buts! I love you all and I can afford it. If it hadn't been for all of you, I might not be here today. Let me do this," Harry argued. "You have been my mother in all but blood and I want you to have something back in any way that I can give it."

"You already have dear." Molly hugged her, tears in her eyes.

"Then make me happy and let me do this. It will make me feel good," Harry sighed catering to the other woman's motherly instincts.

"Oh...very well... but do not get carried away!" Molly stamped her foot lightly, exerting an effort to assume her maternal authority, but there were tears in her eyes.

"Good! Madam Malkin if you could show us your wares now we will pick out a few and try them on."

"Excellent!" The woman stated leading them towards a section of her shop catering to wedding apparel.

The women looked around eagerly and made a few selections. Harry and the others helping Phaedra.

"Ooo...I like this one, Aunt Harry!" Phaedra pointed excitedly towards a royal blue set of robes trimmed in gold silk.

"Planning on becoming a Ravenclaw when you get to Hogwarts?" Ginny teased. "Their colors are blue and yellow." "I'm sorry dear but those are for the older women," Madam Malkin explained. "I have others for you though." She led Harry and Molly over to another rack of samples.

"What do you think of these, Phaedra?" Harry questioned, as the child looked them over. "I know you like pink."

"No, I want something different. I always wear pink."

"Then why not get something in blue or green? It would accent your blond hair."

"Hmm...Can I get something with a pattern on it?"

"Of course," the shopkeeper said, noting Harry nodding in her direction.

"This is pretty." She had selected a powder blue with little silver butterflies flitting around it.

"I think it is rather busy," Molly stated. "How about this one?" She held up a dress in deep purple with lavender trim and an appliqué of a witch stirring a cauldron."

"I think my uncles would like it." Phaedra beamed.

"That one also comes with a matching lavender cloak trimmed in purple satin," Madam Malkin remarked. "Would you like to try it on Phaedra?"

"Okay," she agreed.

"You look around Harry. I will help Madam Malkin with Phaedra," Molly directed, following them into a fitting room.

"What do you think of this, Harry?" Hermione asked perusing the selections. She had picked out an amber colored gown with chocolate brocade trim, which highlighted her eyes and contrasted with her brown hair. The material would reflect with an iridescent golden glow when walking.

"Oh, I really like that for you, Mione. What do you think, Gin?"

"Ron will flip. Go and try it on, Hermione."

"What about you, Ginny? See anything you like?" Hermione asked.

"I really like this pale green with the forest green satin trim but I think it may be a bit too much green."

"Try it on. We can always see if Madam Malkin can change the trim," Harry suggested.

"All right," Ginny agreed smiling.

"How about you, Harry? Don't you see anything you like?"

"I have an idea what I want but I will wait for Madam Malkin. I'm not sure if I will have to have it customized or not."

"Hah! I knew you were thinking about what you wanted even when you denied it," Ginny chuckled.

"Not really, Gin, but I kind of got an idea in my head and it just won't go away."

"Well what is it then?" Hermione questioned eagerly.

"You'll see it when I find out if I need to have it done special. I have to speak with Madam Malkin first. Go and try on your outfits. I'll keep perusing while I wait."

"That's our Harry. Never divulges anything till she's ready," Hermione laughed.

The two girls entered the fitting rooms as Phaedra and Molly emerged. The girls stopped to admire her outfit.

"Phaedra you look so pretty!" Harry smiled. "Just like a little princess."

"I think it makes your blond hair really stand out," Hermione agreed.

"Maybe we could have her hair put up for the wedding?" Ginny questioned, sweeping Phaedra's hair off her shoulders to get an idea of what she would look like.

"Do you like it, Phaedra?" Harry asked.

"I love it, Aunt Harry, can we buy it? Pleeeasssse?"

"Do you want to make any changes in it?"

"No, I like it just like this."

"You will be the best dressed little girl at the wedding then." Harry winked with a nod. "Now why don't you two try yours on while Molly and I look around? She still has to find something too."

Molly and Harry quietly perused the racks of clothing while Phaedra watched in fascination. Molly seemed to prefer the less expensive sections while Harry pulled out a few possible alternatives, which the older woman would never have even considered due to the cost.

"Harry those robes are lovely but I would be uncomfortable in something so extravagant," Molly told her. Harry had selected a

periwinkle satin robe with silver threads through out, trimmed with dark blue silk. "I think I would like to try this one on though," Molly stated, holding up a corn silk yellow taffeta with brown trim.

"Try them both on Molly," Harry insisted. She knew Molly would look stunning in the blue and it would highlight her red hair and blue eyes.

"Very well dear, if it will make you happy."

"As Severus would say, exceedingly so," Harry quipped just as her two friends emerged from the fitting rooms. "You both look stunning!"

"Do you really think so, Harry?" Hermione asked, pleased with her friend's reaction.

"I'm still not sure about all of this green. I feel like a Christmas ornament with my red hair," Ginny remarked.

"Hmm...I see what you mean, Ginny. Maybe if we change the colors to silver with the dark green trim? I have a feeling a certain blond Slytherin would like that," Harry teased.

"I have just the thing," Madam Malkin told them coming over to study their selections. I would have to make it up for you though. Let me show you the sample material." Ginny nodded and the shopkeeper disappeared into the back of the store. Returning a few minutes later, Ginny gasped. She was carrying an exquisite pale silver material, which appeared to be iridescent. "What do you think, Miss Weasley?"

"It's gorgeous. Could you trim it in the forest satin?"

"I think a forest green silk would be better. The satin shine would take away from the effect of the silver where as the silk would not have that problem. It would in fact make it stand out."

"Could she get a cloak to match?" Harry inquired, pleased with Ginny's reaction.

"Oh my yes, I could do the cloak in a solid green silk with a touch of the silver at the neck and cuffs."

"I think that would be fantastic!" Hermione grinned, looking at Harry.

"That makes two of us." Harry smiled warmly. She was genuinely happy at the excited expression in Ginny's eyes. Harry could tell she was thinking of Draco's reaction.

"I think Draco will faint when he sees her," Phaedra piped up, "and I don't even like boys!" The adults laughed at the little girl's remarks.

"I thought you liked my twin brothers?" Ginny kidded with a twinkle in her eyes.

"Well they're different!" Phaedra retorted.

"Ahem," Molly cleared her throat, shifting nervously. "Ginny, perhaps..."

"No!" Harry interrupted knowing Molly was worried about the cost. "This is my treat and I don't want to hear any more about money." Harry folded her arms across her chest and looked at Molly with a defiant smile.

"Oh, all right then," Molly gave in. She knew that both of her 'daughters' would argue incessantly if she continued and did not want either of them to be disappointed.

"Good. Now that that's settled why don't you try on the robes we picked, Mum?" Harry said, knowing that calling Molly mum always melted her heart.

"I'll be right back then." Molly went to the fitting rooms while Ginny busied herself with Madam Malkin who was taking her measurements. Hermione's selection had fit perfectly as did Phaedra's and the shopkeeper put them aside to be picked up later. Meanwhile, Harry contented herself with looking at various gowns; robes and material samples while Hermione took Phaedra over to a portion of the shop to select matching shoes for their new robes. Ginny joined them as soon as Madam Malkin was finished with her.

"Is there anything you like, Miss Potter?" the kindly businesswoman inquired?

"Yes, I rather like this flowing silk with the shimmering threads going through it."

"That is a lovely choice but how about a particular style?"

"Well...ah...I kind of have an idea. I know Professor Snape buys his robes here and I would like something in a similar style but somehow combining a Muggle gown at the same time."

"Hmm...Come on over to my drawing table and we will see what I can do." Harry followed her and Madam Malkin drew up some sketches by tapping her wand on various pieces of blank parchment. After a few variations, Harry beamed up at the older woman.

"That's it! That is the one I want," she exclaimed excitedly.

"I think you will be absolutely beautiful in it." Madam Malkin nodded, pleased with the outcome.

Harry had selected a high-necked form fitted dress with buttons down the front. The sleeves were tapered with a slight cuff at the end similar to Severus' outer robes. It had a matching long sleeveless cloak, which fit over it. The cloak would remain open, falling off her shoulders to form a train complimenting the gown. They then selected which materials to use. She chose a lightweight white satin for the gown. The cloak was a soft silk, which would have a rippling effect to billow out behind her in much the same way as Severus' robes as it fell into the train behind her. The edges would be trimmed in iridescent silvery white silk. Madam Malkin then suggested that the cuffs, collar and buttons on the gown be done in the same shimmery silk to complete the ensemble. Harry grinned with delight. Her smile widened when Madam Malkin reached beneath the counter and took out a pearl tiara and matching earrings with the same iridescence as the material. After taking a quick set of measurements, Madam Malkin assured Harry that the gown would be completed in plenty of time for the wedding just as Molly emerged from the dressing room.

"What do you think, Harry?" she asked. Molly had put on the yellow corn silk robes.

"It looks very nice on you, Molly." Harry tried unsuccessfully to hide her disappointment that she had not donned the blue robes.

"Don't worry dear. I will try on the other set too. I do like the yellow ones though. They are more my style."

"Don't make any judgments till you try on the others. You might like them better," Madam Malkin advised kindly. Molly nodded and turned back to the dressing rooms. She emerged a few minutes later to find all the girls waiting.

"That color blue looks absolutely gorgeous on you, Mum," Ginny enthused. "I think you should buy it."

"I still felt more comfortable in the other style. These are a bit too form fitting for my figure."

"I have an idea. Molly did look nice in the yellow but the color made her look a bit washed out with the red hair," Harry remarked thoughtfully. She hated to admit it but the style of the yellow robes did look nicer on her adopted mother. "Madam Malkin, could you make up a set of robes in the style of the yellow ones using this blue material?"

"Absolutely, Molly will look simply ravishing. While the other style suits her so does this color combination."

"I think that would be wonderful," Hermione agreed.

"What about it, Mrs. Weasley?" Harry inquired.

"Well..." Mrs. Weasley considered, "if you don't think it would be too much trouble?"

"It will be no trouble at all," the shopkeeper stated.

"Then it's all settled. As soon as Molly is measured and we both pick out matching shoes, we can head over to the beauty parlor."

"What about you, Aunt Harry? Aren't you going to get new robes too?"

"Ah...Madam Malkin and I designed my wedding robes while you were all busy. I am also swearing her to secrecy since I know the press will be trying to find out what I will be wearing," Harry stated looking over towards Madam Malkin.

"They certainly will not find out from me," Madam Malkin stated emphatically.

"Ooo...can we see the designs?" Ginny demanded excitedly.

"Nope, you will all see me the day of the wedding." She grinned mischievously.

"Harry that's not fair," Hermione pouted. "You saw my dress before hand."

"That's true and you looked very beautiful in it too." Harry smiled. Ron and Hermione had been married on the battlefield the day Harry had defeated Voldemort. They had also opted to go ahead and have their originally planned Muggle style ceremony a few weeks later, following a suitable mourning period for Hermione's parents and Charlie Weasley.

"Then why can't we see the pattern?" Ginny demanded.

"Because I want my two bridesmaids to be surprised when they help me get ready."

"What!" they exclaimed in unison.

"You heard me. I'm not really into this wedding stuff but I want you both beside me. That's what sisters are for."

"But Harry, we should have gotten similar outfits then," Hermione stated, perplexed.

"I told you I'm not into this wedding stuff to that degree. I wanted you both to wear what you liked, not some silly outfits you'll never wear again. Besides, we're having a traditional Wizarding service. The only one to go up the aisle will be Phaedra and myself. You guys will meet me at the front of the church along with the other attendants."

"Harry's right. The attendants stand on either side of whoever is doing the service to act witnesses. Since this is also a reaffirming of the original Protectorship with a final rite it is done differently," Molly explained. "I'm not entirely sure of the exact service but I believe Harry will stand with Severus. Sirius and Remus will stand behind them, one on either side."

"I will have to see if I can find any more information. I wonder if Dumbledore has any books relating to the ceremony." Hermione's eyes glowed with interest at the thought of reading about something new.

"Uh oh, Miss Hermione has that look on her face again."

"What look is that, Phaedra?" Mrs. Weasley questioned, while Ginny and Harry chuckled in unison.

"The one she gets when she talks about reading something," Phaedra informed her.

"Well before we end up in Flourish and Blotts I think it's time we headed to the beauty parlor," Harry laughed. She finished settling the bill with Madam Malkin and had the robes charged to her account at Gringotts. The shopkeeper assured her the new robes would be delivered next week. The group then proceeded through the streets to the beauty shop where Circe and Phaedra had taken Harry two years before. The same young witch greeted them and all the girls had their hair restyled. Harry made sure to explain that she wanted to keep hers long since she would be wearing a tiara for the wedding. She then arranged to have the beautician come to Snape Castle to style all of the girls' hair again for the wedding. Mrs. Weasley watched them all chattering away with a warm motherly expression when the beautician turned to her.

"Now what kind of hairdo would you like, Mrs. Weasley?"

"What? Oh no, I wasn't planning on having my hair done."

"You may not have planned for it but we did," Ginny smirked. "It's about time you paid some more attention to yourself Mum."

"It's really not necessary," Molly answered flummoxed by all the attention.

"Come on, Mum," Harry pleaded, once again catering to her motherly affections. "I think Arthur could use a nice surprise."

"Yeah Mum, it may put a new spark in your marriage. After all, now that we're all grown up I'll bet Dad would like to spend some alone time with you." Ginny gave her mother a sly look.

"Ginny Weasley, that will be enough," Molly reprimanded, knowing what her daughter was inferring. "Our marriage doesn't need a new spark. I didn't have seven children for nothing you know." The girls all giggled while Phaedra just looked confused. No one bothered to explain.

"I think it would be nice to do something different for a change, Molly," Hermione added.

"Why not get a hair cut? It would be the new you!" Harry encouraged.

"Well, maybe just a trim," Molly muttered seating herself in the chair the beautician indicated. Once her hair was washed and conditioned she studied Mrs. Weasley's features with a smile.

"Now just relax and trust me," the young witch insisted as her scissors magically began to trim at Molly's long red locks. Twenty minutes later Molly was staring into the mirror in shock.

"Oh my, what ever will Arthur say?"

"He will want to know what you have been drinking to make you look so young," the mirror replied. "I must say you don't look old enough to be the mother of these other young ladies." Molly flushed bright red with embarrassment.

"Dad's gonna think you're absolutely gorgeous," Ginny affirmed.

"Ginny's right, you look great, Mrs. Weasley." Harry was smiling so brightly Mrs. Weasley couldn't help but look at her with wonder. 'I

can't recall ever having seen her so happy,' she considered, eyes filling with tears.

"Don't you like it?" Harry asked misconstruing the elder woman's expression.

"Harry, let your blocks down and you will find I have tears of joy to see you so happy," she said referring to Harry's empathic ability. Harry gave her a quick hug, feeling a lump forming in her throat.

"Now that that is settled I really would like to go to the book store," Hermione announced smiling.

"Let me just make arrangements to have Molly's hair done for the wedding too."

"Oh, Harry, that is really not necessary."

"Don't you want to help me get ready too?"

"I would love that dear." She beamed at Harry affectionately.

"Good," Harry said turning to the proprietress of the salon. A few minutes later they were back on the street. "I think it is going to rain any minute," Harry remarked looking at the threatening clouds. "Why don't we go to the book store and then have lunch."

"I'll vote for that," Hermione agreed.

"Me too, I'm famished," Ginny spoke up from behind.

"I want to go and see Mr. Fred and George!"

"We will stop at the joke shop as soon as we've finished lunch, Phaedra," Mrs. Weasley promised. "Then I have a few stops to make. Would you like to come with me to do your shopping?"

"Could I?"

"Certainly, have you given any thought to what you want to spend your money on?"

"Not yet but I'll know it when I see it."

"I think you should look for a wedding present for Severus and Harry," Molly whispered conspiratorially.

"That's a good idea! Can I get something for myself too?"

"I know a few shops that are not too expensive. We'll look around a bit and see what we can come up with."

"Okay." Phaedra laughed, pleased with the idea.

Once in the bookstore Hermione went right to the reference section for information on Wizarding weddings in conjunction with the Protectorship but there was nothing available. The girls browsed for a while. As usual Hermione bought some new books. They then headed towards the Chinese restaurant for lunch. Cho greeted them at the door and seated them in a secluded booth. She immediately conjured a pot of Chinese tea.

"Grandfather told me you would be along. He always knows these things." She smiled warmly. "He insists on reading your tea leaves before you all leave."

"That would be great," Harry told her cheerily.

"Humph, divination," Hermione snorted when Cho was out of earshot and they had ordered.

"Now Mione, even you can't say that sometimes there are real prophecies."

"I suppose not, Harry, but just the same most of it is just plain silly."

"Oh come on, Hermione, it will be fun. I hear Mr. Chang's never wrong." Ginny berated her sister-in-law.

"I think he just uses good sense and the wisdom of people's desires."

"He knew I would turn into a winged dragon."

"We all knew that!" Hermione defended herself.

"Maybe but he also knew I would come through a fire to do it." Harry shuddered at the memory.

"I'm sorry, Harry, I don't mean to dredge up those memories," Hermione apologized.

"No matter, let's just enjoy our lunch," she answered digging into the sweet and sour chicken that had appeared in front of her.

They all ate heartily on lo mein, egg drop soup, sweet and sour chicken, ribs, and steamed vegetables with pork fried rice and egg rolls. An ominous rumble of thunder greeted their ears just as they finished. Harry couldn't escape the feelings of apprehension, which continued to knot her stomach as another thunderclap with a burst of lightening announced the summer storm in all its fury.

"Let's hope it doesn't rain like this for the wedding or Ginny's graduation," Molly murmured as Mr. Chang came over to their table and bowed.

"It is my belief that only sunshine will grace those two wondrous events," he greeted. "It is good to see you all so well and happy." The ancient Chinese gentleman smiled.

"It is equally good to see you the same way," Harry replied.

"Ah...the feathered dragon knows how to keep an old man's spirit happy."

"It's good to see you again Mr. Chang," Molly stated respectfully. The old Chinese man had always awed her even more than Albus.

"May an old man join you for dessert? I suspect the little one may just be wanting something like strawberry ice cream." He nodded in Phaedra's direction. With a wave of his hand a large cup of her favorite dessert appeared.

"Thank you, Mr. Chang." Phaedra beamed with delight.

"You are most welcome, little one," he replied. Waving his hand once again a tray of almond cookies and other sweets appeared. "It would

pleasure me greatly to read your leaves." He indicated the empty teacups.

"We would be honored, Mr. Chang," Harry responded, shooting a look of warning towards Hermione.

"Then I shall begin most respectfully with your matriarch." Molly smiled nervously as he picked up her cup and studied the leaves. "You are like a mother lion and protect your cubs fiercely. Each has given you much pleasure and pain but you have never ceased to see them as they truly are. All will fill your years with much happiness and many grandchildren. You will soon be graced with the first of them but not from where you would expect." His dark eyes twinkled merrily as Molly shot a look towards Hermione. He then picked up Hermione's cup. "You do not trust your inner voice but only wish to see that which is plausible. This will change with time. There is much in the universe, which remains mysterious. You will help to unlock some of these mysteries when you learn to listen to that which you cannot see." Hermione looked at him with wide eyes. She had just applied for a job in the research department of the Department of Mysteries and had not even told Ron. Next he studied Ginny's cup. "Ah...the spirit of adventure resides within. You will travel far with the one who shares your soul. Cats are always free to wander but return home." Ginny flushed up to the roots of her hair. Just prior to finishing school she had become an animagus. She was a small orange cat but was not yet registered. McGonagall had arranged for her to register after graduation. She would demonstrate her skill at the Graduation ceremony.

"Do me next," Phaedra begged through a mouthful of ice cream.

"Phaedra, don't talk with your mouth full," Molly admonished gently.

"The little one has yet to learn patience," Mr. Chang laughed. "It will come with time." He picked up her cup. "Harry, may I see your cup also?" he asked. She handed it over as the thunder pealed in the background. Mr. Chang studied the two cups intently. His face was set into a blank mask. "You have faced much together. Your love for one another is strong. It will help to bond and protect you. Reflections of the past will lead the Grimm to the truth during the time of the wolf.

Golden eyes shall point the way. Things are not always what they seem. Look hard enough and you will see that which is hidden. The arm of the black serpent shall lead the way to the light for only the Phoenix may carry the one who has been lost back to the land of the living.” Mr. Chang then blinked as all eyes stared at him. “I apologize. Sometimes I become lost in my thoughts.” He looked at Harry and nodded with a mysterious smile, then rose from the table bowing, before he departed.

“What the devil was that all about?” Hermione questioned angrily. “He merely muttered in riddles.”

“I hate riddles,” Harry commented. “Especially when they appear to be some kind of prophecy.”

“It sounded more like a warning to me,” Ginny reflected. “What do you think Mum?”

“Mr. Chang is a very mysterious man. He will never tell you anything in plain English but he often knows things.”

“Humph, I think it was just a lot of gibberish. He was putting on a show.”

“Just the same, Hermione, I think I should put the memory of what he said in my Pensieve later on. It may be important.” Harry could not tell her friends that every nerve in her body had been burning with terror during Mr. Chang’s reading. Something was coming and it wasn’t good. Something that would affect both Harry and Phaedra. She only hoped she could protect the little girl. ‘Why is it always me?’ she questioned in her mind. ‘I hoped when Voldemort was gone I could have a normal life.’

“Aunt Harry, did Mr. Chang say something bad? I didn’t understand it at all.”

“No, Phaedra, he was just giving Miss Harry a riddle to solve.”

“Oh, like a game?”

"Yeah, baby, like a game." Harry smiled reassuringly at Phaedra but her stomach was tied up in knots.

"Well I think the rain has stopped. Lets be on our way," Molly intoned. "I'm sure Phaedra would like to see Fred and George."

Harry quickly paid the bill glad to be out of the restaurant. As she exited the building to meet the others on the street some of her anxiety was dissipated by a large rainbow, which was hovering over Diagon Alley.

"Isn't it beautiful, Aunt Harry?" Phaedra bounced up and down on her heels.

"It sure is! I haven't seen one in quite some time."

"Is there really a pot of gold at the end?"

"I don't know. We should ask Dumbledore."

"That's just an old folk tale common to Muggles and Wizards alike," Hermione stated matter of factly.

"I don't know dear. The Leprechauns really are reputed to keep their gold in large pots and cauldrons," Molly informed them.

"Fred and George know all about Leprechaun gold. You should ask them about the time we all went to the Quidditch World Cup," Harry smirked. She knew Molly had no idea about her sons having bet on the outcome of the event and being paid in Leprechaun gold. Molly just looked at her quizzically.

The shop was busy when they entered and one of the twins was behind the counter with Lee Jordan. The other twin was demonstrating the newest version of the Skiving Snack Boxes to a group of kids who Harry recognized as some of the students at Hogwarts. As soon as they spotted Harry, they disappeared from the shop. They didn't want their teacher to catch them with snack boxes.

"Harry! Good to see you, but I dearly wish you would not scare off the customers," George laughed.

"Sorry George," Harry chuckled. She could tell the twins apart empathically by their emotional make up. "As a Hogwarts teacher it is my responsibility to make sure they tow the straight and narrow."

"You are certainly more responsible than my sons," Molly commented looking at her errant son. She did not see Harry rolling her eyes behind her back as George had all he could do to contain his laughter.

"Mr. Fredgeorge! I missed you both," Phaedra interrupted charging into the nearest twin to give him a big hug.

"And we," Fred began, "missed you too," George finished. "Our hearts," George continued, "are breaking," Fred added, "since you have not," George went on, "come to see us," Fred finished.

"Talk about being on the same wave length," Harry shook her head, chuckling. "I have never understood how they can do that."

"Me neither and I'm their sister," Ginny agreed, stepping up to hug her older brothers.

"Have you both got dates for the wedding?" Hermione asked. "Ron told me you were both seeing people."

"Ah yes...we will be accompanied by two beautiful young ladies," Fred remarked.

"Yeah, they are coming with Padma and Parvati Patil," Ginny smirked.

"Now little sister why would you give away our secrets?" Fred asked.

"It sounds like double trouble to me," Hermione snorted.

"Who are these twins? Do I know them?" Phaedra demanded. "I wanted you to be with me."

"And so we shall sweet Phaedra." George scooped up the little girl. "We will dance the night away." He then pretended to dance around the room, Phaedra laughing with delight.

"I really think you two should wait for her to grow up. It seems the perfect match." Hermione rolled her eyes.

"And perhaps we shall." Fred wiggled his brows.

"Just remember her Aunt is the most powerful witch around and her uncle the most unsurpassed Potions Master of the age. He is quite proficient with poisons." Ginny grinned wickedly as the twins pretended to cringe with fear.

"Don't worry Mr. Fredgeorge. Aunt Harry and Uncle Sev won't hurt you."

"Phaedra, we might believe that about Harry but your uncle is another story."

"Then I will turn him into a canary!" Phaedra exclaimed smugly.

The group continued to visit for a little while and the twins gave Phaedra some simple candies. Harry made certain they were not magically charmed to create havoc.

"Harry, I hear the Dursley's are coming to the ceremony," George remarked trying to look innocent.

"Yes, they are, young man and I expect the two of you to behave towards the Muggles!" Molly interrupted before Harry could reply. "I will not have Harry and Severus' reception ruined by the both of you."

"Don't worry, Mum. We would never dream of it," Fred placated.

"On the other hand we may just be the best entertainment," George whispered to Harry.

"Let's just see if they behave first," she whispered back. "I don't want any trouble."

"Right. We promise not to do anything so long as they do not cause you any problems."

"Thanks George," Harry responded. She knew he wasn't lying. Nevertheless, she decided it might be a good idea to keep a wary eye on them at the reception.

"Well it is time we got back to work," Fred informed them. "We have new wares waiting for the unwary."

"Humph," Molly snorted. "Come along Phaedra. I need to run those errands. Would you girls like to come with us?"

"No I need to pick up a few things at Quality Quidditch Supplies," Harry answered.

"I'll go with you, Harry," Ginny remarked. "Are you coming Mione?"

"I need to go over to the animal emporium. Crookshanks has been having a fur ball problem and I need to get him some medicine."

"Okay. How about we all meet back at the Leaky Cauldron in an hour?" Harry suggested.

"I believe that will be sufficient time to get my errands done and help Phaedra shop," Molly agreed. "Then we can all have a spot of tea or a cold drink before heading home."

The small group departed the twins shop amid hearty good-byes and all headed in their separate directions. Molly took Phaedra by the hand and Harry watched as they headed up the street. Her feeling of unease continued to assert itself. 'Probably just lack of sleep and pre wedding jitters combined with PMS,' she shrugged heading off with Ginny...

Molly went to the market to pick up a roasting chicken for dinner that night and then headed towards a small inexpensive gift shop. While Arthur made more money now that he was Minister of Magic, they were still far from wealthy, even with all of her children gone except for Ginny; not to mention that the twins still ate most meals at home with them before retiring back to their flat above the store. She still had to maintain a budget. Still, Molly wanted to get something special for Harry and Severus' wedding gift and knew that she might just find something in *Wondrous Magical Gifts and Treasures*. The store

specialized in both new and used estate items. She felt they might have something of interest for both herself and Phaedra.

"I think you may find something to buy here, for Harry and Severus' present, Phaedra, as well as something for yourself," she told the little girl as they entered the shop. It was small and cramped with various items displayed throughout the shop. Phaedra immediately began to look around. Molly was reminded of a young Harry. The child had that same sense of wonder and amazement. Molly hoped her curious nature would not get her into too much trouble.

Phaedra wandered around looking at different things while Molly spoke with the proprietor of the store. She had shopped there in the past and he was familiar with her tastes. Phaedra was quite taken with a display of hair clips, which could change color to match your outfit and a small locket made to look like a Phoenix.

"Do you see anything you like Little Lady?" the shop owner questioned.

"I like the hair clips and the pretty locket. It reminds me of my Aunt Harry."

"Aunt Harry? You mean your Aunt Harriet don't you?"

"No, my Aunt's name is Harry. She's famous."

"And what would your Aunt be doing with a boy's name?"

"My Uncle said she was named that to protect her as a baby. Everyone believed she was a boy till she was a teenager."

"Just why would that be." The man had decided to humor the child.

"To protect her from the Dark Lord. She killed him when she was a baby and then two more times till he finally went away for good."

"Right. That sounds like Harry Potter. You shouldn't make up stories like that young lady," he reprimanded.

"Phaedra is telling the truth. Harry Potter is her aunt. At least she will be in another two weeks when she marries Severus Snape," Molly interceded, her tone steely.

"Oh, Mrs. Weasley. I am sorry. I thought the child was just making it up," he apologized. "What can I do for you...er..."

"Phaedra," Molly informed him realizing he did not know the child's name.

"Well then, Phaedra, what can I do for you?"

"I need a present for my Aunt and Uncle's wedding and I want to buy something for myself too. I don't have much money though."

"How much do you have?"

"Ten galleons."

"Ten galleons. That is quite a sum for a little girl. I'll tell you what. I think I have the perfect gift for your Aunt and Uncle. I know he's a Potions Master at Hogwarts and head of Slytherin House. I understand Miss Potter was a Gryffindor."

"That is correct," Molly replied, "do you think you have something Phaedra would like?"

"I believe I may have something for you both. I should have realized you would be attending the ceremony Mrs. Weasley. As the Minister's wife..."

"Harry is like a daughter to me. I have known her since she was eleven years old. My son and his wife are her best friends." Mrs. Weasley cut him off.

"I beg your pardon. I didn't mean to appear rude." He then showed her a blank piece of woven cloth. I don't know if you have ever seen these but they are called Union Cloths. We embroider them with either family crests or create new ones and put the initials of the couple in the middle. I thought the little one would like to give one to Miss Potter and Professor Snape."

"I like that but what would I put on it?" Phaedra asked.

"Here are some pictures to get an idea," he placed a large book on the counter. She flipped the pages and looked at the images.

"Can I use any of these?" she asked.

"Of course but the more you put into it the more it will cost," he informed her.

"How much would it be if I put Aunt Harry and Uncle Sev's initials in the middle and then had a snake and a phoenix on either side? Her animagus is a phoenix. I also want to put a black dog on top and a wolf's head on the bottom. Uncle Sirius and Uncle Moony are her Protectors too. They shouldn't be left out."

"I have heard of the Protectorship. They are all joined by blood. Let me see how much it will cost."

The man disappeared into the back room while Phaedra continued to browse around. She kept feeling like she was being watched. As she was about to turn back to the front of the store she caught a reflection out of the corner of her eye. In the back of the shop there was an old beveled floor mirror. It was supported by two carved wooden snakes that formed the frame and met at the top. Phaedra was inexplicably drawn to the mirror. She was admiring herself when the salesman returned.

"I see you like that old mirror."

"I think it's really interesting. I never saw one like this before."

"I believe it is one of a kind. Would you like to give it to your Aunt and Uncle?" he questioned.

"No, I don't think Aunt Harry would want a mirror. I like it though. How much is it?"

"Well...let me think. The tapestry would normally be ten galleons but I have a smaller one that you could have framed and for five. That would leave five galleons for the mirror."

"I should think that the mirror would be more expensive than that," Molly chimed in.

"It is from an estate auction. I have no idea who it belonged to. The few people who seemed to be interested changed their minds. It is just taking up space in the store."

"Do you like the mirror Phaedra? It seems rather odd to me." Molly suppressed a shiver.

"I do like it, Mrs. Weasley, and my Uncle and Mummy were both Slytherins. I think it would be pretty all cleaned up."

"Very well dear but it will use up all of your money."

"I'll tell you what. I'll throw in the hair clips and necklace you were looking at before. No sense in having a mirror if you can't admire your reflection in something pretty."

"Very well," Molly conceded seeing the delight in Phaedra's eyes. How soon can you have the tapestry ready for Phaedra?"

"I can have them both ready within a few minutes. Have you made up your mind between the crystal glasses or the silver platter?"

"Yes, I think the glasses would be nice with the matching wine decanter."

"I shall wrap them up for you," the shopkeeper beamed. Returning to the back of the store to see to their purchases he was feeling both relieved and dismayed. 'Maybe I shouldn't let the kid buy that mirror but I'm glad to be rid of it. The damned thing gives me the creeps. Makes you feel like someone is watching you.' He shrugged off his morbid thoughts deciding he was just feeling out of sorts since the war. He was getting old. He could not have known that from deep within the mirror a pair of cold gray eyes was watching from within a pale face, the ruby red lips drawn into an evil smile...

Phaedra and Harry returned to Snape Castle in time for dinner. They were greeted by Sirius as they came out of the floo.

"Hey, how was the shopping trip?"

"Great," Harry responded, kissing him on the cheek.

"Mrs. Weasley helped me to shop," Phaedra stated indicating a small package in her robe pocket. "I'm going to have Uncle Tiberius enlarge my packages after dinner."

"Hey, what about me?" Sirius laughed.

"Nope, you can't see what I bought. It's a surprise for the wedding."

"Didn't you get anything for yourself?"

"Yes, I bought a pretty mirror. The man said it took up too much room in his store and he wanted to get rid of it."

"Really, that's interesting," Sirius looked at Harry who arched her brow with a shrug.

"I think it was because he thought I was lying when I told him about Aunt Harry and Uncle Sev. Mrs. Weasley yelled at him..." Phaedra giggled.

"I'll bet she did." Sirius grinned at them. He was more than familiar with the Weasley tempers.

"What's for dinner? I'm starved," Harry asked.

"Haven't a clue but it smells delicious." Sirius sniffed expectantly.

"Come on Phaedra," Harry said pulling on her sleeve, "let's get cleaned up and have something to eat."

"Do I have to take a bath tonight?" Phaedra questioned as they went up the stairs and Sirius went into the library to await dinner.

"Not till after we eat..." Harry's voice faded as the two girls disappeared up the stairs.

The two girls told about their day while they ate and then the house elves took Phaedra up to bed. She was too tired to argue. After

kissing them all good night, she allowed Hazel to see to her needs. Harry hadn't mentioned what happened at the Chinese restaurant and Phaedra was too distracted to go into any details. Therefore, the four wizards were amazed when Harry went and retrieved her Pensieve.

"Harry why are you taking out your Pensieve? Was your trip that memorable?" Severus arched his brow with a sneer.

"Don't be silly Severus. I have something I want to show all of you. We told you Mr. Chang read our tea leaves but when he got to mine and Phaedra's...well...just let me show you." Concentrating on the memory, she placed her wand to her head. Extracting the silver thread she placed it into the metallic like fluid. A few moments later they were viewing the memory. When they exited the Pensieve the group all appeared thoughtful.

"I can't say if what Mr. Chang saw in the leaves is a warning or a prophecy but I am concerned. From what I can see, it appears that something is going to happen. Although, reading tea leaves is not usually a good indicator of future events," Tiberius remarked.

"I agree uncle; however, knowing Harry's past experiences I feel we should keep an open mind."

"What about Phaedra? It seems he was reading something in both cups which would indicate that whatever is going to happen will involve them both," Remus added.

"It's possible that it is simply something ordinary too. We could all be misconstruing the situation." Sirius tried to sound hopeful but his voice fell flat.

"Just tell me that it doesn't concern a certain dark wizard whom we all know and love," Harry remarked sarcastically. "I can not go through that again..." her voice trailed off as she closed her eyes with the memory of her final confrontation with Lord Voldemort.

"Harry," Severus put his arms around her shoulders comfortingly, "I sincerely doubt this has anything to do with another return of the Dark Lord. He was most definitely destroyed."

"Severus is right, love. If you don't believe us take a look at your forehead," Sirius stated firmly. 'Christ, I don't want her to worry about that bastard anymore. Hasn't she gone through enough already?' he questioned in his mind.

"I agree. Severus' Dark Mark would be back in full force if it were anything to do with Riddle, Princess. I think this may be something more mundane."

"I tend to agree but we should still be on guard. My niece does have a tendency to get into mischief." Tiberius arched his brow in amusement.

"I hope that's all it is." Harry looked up doubtfully.

"As Hagrid would say, 'what will come, will come,' and that is more than true." Sirius flashed his boyish smile.

"I think you will see things are not so serious after a hot bath and a good night's sleep," Severus commented. "Come on, I'll walk you upstairs."

"Yeah, you're all probably right." Harry rubbed her eyes tiredly. "It's been a long day."

Severus walked her upstairs to the bedroom, quietly returning the Pensieve to her closet shelf. They were careful not to wake Phaedra. Harry kissed Severus good night but did not wish to leave his arms too soon. They just stood embraced for a few minutes, Severus rubbing her back, Harry's head resting on his chest. Closing her eyes, she enjoyed his warmth, relishing in a feeling of love and security before he finally had to release her. He departed following a soft kiss and Harry headed into the shower before tumbling into the great bed beside Phaedra. She fell asleep almost as soon as her head hit the pillow, but her dreams were filled with Phaedra calling out to her from somewhere in the dark...

Chapter 5

Tomorrow was the day Harry and Severus would be joined in the Formal Marriage of Protection. She had spent the past two weeks in a whirlwind of preparations. An air of excitement was hanging over Snape Castle and the neighboring village. Dumbledore would be arriving shortly. He would go over the ceremony with them before dinner so that all parties involved would know what to expect. All of them were looking forward to his arrival and the others who would be part of the ceremony and would be coming for dinner in the evening. Harry was hoping to corner Dumbledore alone at some point since she wished to speak with him about Sirius and Remus. After doing some quiet research, Harry had discovered that same sex marriage was accepted in the wizarding world. It was often performed among soul mates. She wanted more than ever to see her godfather and Remus joined and happy. The years they had been apart had taken their toll. Now that they were back together Harry wanted them to make it permanent. The only problem was approaching the subject with the two wizards without causing any embarrassment.

Harry knew that the two men would not live with her and Severus forever. Snape castle was the ancestral home of the Snapes. Sirius and Remus would not wish to intrude on their married life when it was not necessary. They would still be bound to Harry through the original rites and would come when needed and for family affairs. Nevertheless, they also deserved a life and privacy of their own. She knew that if any problems or threats arose all she would need to do is contact them with a simple spell that would be woven into her wedding band. Each of the two wizards would receive a silver band to wear on their right ring finger. Harry and Severus' rings would be gold and worn on the traditional left ring finger.

Harry was mulling this over as she walked up the stairs to fetch Phaedra who had been playing in the bedroom. As she neared the room they shared, she could hear the little girl speaking. She knew the child was alone, keeping to herself more often since the visit to Diagon Alley. She had also developed an imaginary playmate, whom she identified as Beautiful Blessing, and would spend her time talking and playing games with her in front of the full-length mirror she had purchased.

Harry could not say why, but she didn't like the mirror, although after it had been cleaned up it was quite attractive. Still, something about it made her uneasy yet it seemed harmless enough. She put it down to feeling jealous that Phaedra was not playing with her as often. She had also been having strange dreams, with shadowy figures, but decided they were simply nerves due to her impending marriage. She had mentioned her feelings to Severus but he had simply pooh-poohed Harry's unease. He told her and that Phaedra had been through a lot, putting down her imaginary playmate as a common happening in children having undergone such a trauma. It was simply Phaedra's way of coping with all the changes to her young life.

"Phaedra," Harry called, knocking on the door before opening it to step inside the bedroom. "It's time to go downstairs. Dumbledore will be here in a little while."

"Do I have to come now? Beautiful was going to tell me another story."

"What kind of story?"

"She tells me all kinds of stories. This one was supposed to be about a great wizard and how he fought against the bad people."

"Really, was he anybody I knew," Harry teased, "Your Uncle Sev perhaps? Or maybe it was Dumbledore?"

"I don't know. You interrupted us!" Phaedra pouted. "I really wanted to hear it too."

"You can hear it another time. Don't you want to see Headmaster Dumbledore and the others?"

"I would rather stay here and play with Beautiful. We have lots of fun together."

"Oh...Don't you have fun with me? I play with you too," Harry stated softly, feeling a little bit hurt.

"I'm sorry, Aunt Harry, I didn't mean to make you feel bad," Phaedra said getting up from the floor and hugging Harry. "You've been busy with Uncle Sev and I had no one else to play with."

"You have no reason to be sorry Phaedra. I should have made more time for you. I promise that when the wedding is over we will spend more time together. Maybe we can see if some of your friends can come for a visit too." She smiled fondly.

"Really, do you think my friend Althea could come? Will her mummy let her?" Phaedra babbled excitedly. "Then I won't be so lonely at night when you move in with Uncle Sev."

"We'll just have to send her mother an owl and find out."

"Can we do it today?"

"Sure." Harry grinned. "Maybe we can arrange something for next week and she could stay overnight."

"That would be brilliant! I never had a friend sleep over before. Mummy said we were still too young for sleep overs."

"Then let's go and get Hedwig and find your uncle so we can arrange a possible date."

"Okay," Phaedra responded, tugging on Harry's hand to pull her from the room...

Neither girl had seen the mist forming within the mirror or the twisted smile on the distorted features from within.

"Soon the little one will be mine," the mysterious voice of Beautiful chuckled coldly. "Then I can begin my revenge on the blood traitors. You shall all pay and I will purge the world of its pollutants. My master never knew I took certain precautions in the event of his disfavor..."

Harry and Phaedra entered the dining room to find Dumbledore had already arrived. He was seated with the others enjoying a cup of tea and some biscuits, blue eyes twinkling merrily behind his half moon spectacles.

"Ah...Harry, Phaedra, it is good to see you both looking so well."

"Thank you, Sir. I have missed you." Harry hugged the old man.

"Headmaster Mr. Dumbledore," Phaedra beamed, "Aunt Harry said that I could have my friend sleep over next week!"

"Which friend is that?" Severus inquired arching his brow.

"Althea, you remember her don't you uncle? It will be all right won't it?"

"I see no reason not to invite her so long as you both behave. Do you want to use my owl to send her a letter?"

"Aunt Harry said I could use Hedwig. Besides, Diogenes is grumpy."

"My owl is not grumpy. He is merely proud."

"He's grumpy," Phaedra and Harry agreed in unison, bursting into giggles. Severus knew his owl had a mind of his own and was devoted only to him.

"Since I see you two have already decided then I shall write to her mother and include a letter of assurance along with Phaedra's invitation. Then we can make the arrangements."

"Thank you Uncle Sev. Can I go and write my letter now?"

"You may use the library Phaedra. There is some parchment in the upper left hand drawer. The quills and ink are on the desk. Be careful not to disturb anything else," Severus directed her with a nod. Grabbing a biscuit she skipped out of the room before anyone could change their minds.

"It was very thoughtful of you to have Phaedra invite someone her own age over Harry. It will be good for her." Remus smiled.

"I think so too," Sirius agreed. "She's been spending too much time in front of that mirror she dragged home from Diagon Alley. Something about it bothers me but I can't figure out what it is."

“What mirror is this?” Dumbledore inquired with interest.

“Just some old mirror she bought for her room,” Tiberius explained. “I checked it for spells but I couldn’t find anything.”

“Has she been behaving any differently otherwise?”

“She now has an imaginary friend but I believe it is due to all the adjustments in her life,” Severus stated calmly.

“Would you like me to check the mirror?”

“No, Albus, I do not believe that will be necessary.”

“Sev, I really think the Headmaster should take a look too. I agree with Sirius. Something is just not right about that thing.”

“Harry,” Severus sighed, “we all checked the mirror when she brought it home. I think you just don’t like it because of the snake pattern on the frame. You are so much a Gryffindor.” His dark eyes glittered.

“Humph, tell that to the sorting hat!” she muttered under her breath. Harry knew the hat would have put her into Slytherin if she hadn’t talked it out of it. So did the others.

“Since Tiberius and Severus are satisfied then I shall defer to their judgment Harry. However, should you continue to feel uncomfortable or if Phaedra has any further changes in behavior do not hesitate to contact me,” Dumbledore told them pleasantly. “Mirrors imbued with magical properties are often difficult to detect.”

“We shall call you immediately if we suspect anything, Albus,” Tiberius agreed.

“Then shall we discuss the ceremony?”

“Shouldn’t we wait for the others?” Harry asked.

“There is no need. I can tell them what to do later on. Their basic function is to act as witnesses,” Dumbledore explained.

“Oh...okay, so what do we do?”

"It is quite simple actually. You will face each other and I shall bind your right hands together magically. During that time, I will do the basic wedding ceremony with a few additions for your other two protectors. You will both put the silver rings on them together. Then Severus will place your gold ring on. You will follow suit with his."

"That sounds easy enough," Sirius quipped.

"It is. You are all already bound by blood. This just formalizes the union between Severus and Harry as one which will be consummated."

"Right...I don't think we need to discuss anything more on this." Harry attempted to focus her attention out the window. She could feel the color creeping up her cheeks. Unable to ignore the quiet snicker from Sirius she looked at her godfather, green eyes dancing waywardly. 'This is it...Sirius just gave me the opening I need!' she thought. Taking a deep breath to steady her excitement she spoke aloud. "So my dear godfather have you any plans to make an honest werewolf out of Moony? Or are you planning on dragging your relationship on forever?"

"What!" He exclaimed flustered. Harry had taken him completely off guard.

"I want to know whether you and Remus have plans to marry. I know same sex marriages between soul mates are legal in the wizarding world and I think you have kept him waiting long enough."

Sirius jaw dropped. Recovering himself quickly, Sirius threw back his head, his barking laugh resounding around the room. Harry's cheeks were bright pink now but she had no intention of backing off. Glancing around the room she noted Remus grinning, Severus had arched both brows, Tiberius lips were quirked up in amusement and Dumbledore's blue eyes were sparkling brilliantly as he looked over his half moon spectacles at the animagus. Sirius looked over at them all for a minute before getting up and placing his hands on the shoulders of the werewolf, looking into his golden eyes.

"Remus John Lupin, you are and always have been my Soulmate. We have been through some tough times. Even when I questioned

your loyalty to the Order and you believed I had been the traitor the love was still there," he paused, unable to disguise the painful memories, his voice hitching. "Will you marry me?"

"Sirius..." Remus voice was husky but he displayed no signs of nervousness, "there will be those in our society who will shun you for marrying a werewolf."

"Then they are not our friends and not worth our time. I asked you a question, Moony, that I should have asked you twenty years ago. Will you marry me?"

The room was dead silent while Remus and Sirius continued to look deeply into one another's eyes. Finally, Remus mouth curved into a slow boyish smile, his head nodding.

"Yes, Padfoot, I will marry you."

Harry let out a breath she hadn't realized she had been holding. Sirius pulled Remus up into a fierce hug as they others came over to congratulate them.

"Now this is a wonderful occasion!" Dumbledore remarked with delight. "I will do both ceremonies at the same time."

"NO!" Sirius and Remus yelled simultaneously. The old man looked taken aback.

"Forgive us, Albus, but tomorrow is a special day for Harry and Severus. It should stay that way."

"Remus is right. I think you should just do the ceremony tonight with all of our friends here. Then you can announce it for our families tomorrow following Harry and Severus ceremony," Sirius suggested.

"Harry, Severus, do either of you have any objections to this idea?"

"I think it's brilliant!" Harry looked at Severus for his reaction.

"I have no objection Albus. It makes perfect sense. We can celebrate both unions at tomorrow's reception."

"Excellent. I shall go and get the paperwork done."

"There won't be any problems with the Ministry will there?" Harry questioned worriedly.

"No Child," the Headmaster beamed, "but should they decide to adopt any children then there will be certain restrictions. However, we shall cross that bridge if and when it arises."

"Who's getting adopted," Phaedra asked coming back into the room.

"No one, Phaedra, but uncle Moony and uncle Sirius are getting married tonight!"

"Oh...can they do that?"

"In our society, Phaedra, it is perfectly acceptable between Soulmates," Tiberius answered patiently. "I will explain it to you later in more detail so you will understand."

"Okay. Does this mean we will have a party for them too? With more cake and goodies?"

"Yes, Phaedra, they will have a party with the rest of us after dinner and share in the festivities tomorrow," Severus replied. "Now have you finished your letter?"

"Yes, Uncle Sev. It's right here."

"Then come with me and I shall write a note to your friend's mother to send along with Hedwig."

Phaedra and Severus disappeared back into the study while Tiberius walked Dumbledore to the door. He would apparate to the Ministry and return in time for dinner. Harry was left alone with Remus and Sirius.

"You're something else. You know that kiddo?" Sirius grinned lovingly at his goddaughter.

"I think she's special in more ways than one," Remus agreed beaming.

"I just wanted to make sure you were both happy." Harry blushed at the praise. "I have been thinking about this for quite awhile now...and...well..."she shrugged.

"How did you realize that Moony and I wanted to make our relationship permanent?"

"I knew how much you really love one another. I am an empath you know!"

"Hmm...I wonder what else you are able to deduce with that ability." Remus mused aloud.

"You would be surprised," Harry chuckled. "It's a good thing you put silencing charms on your bedroom."

"Are you telling us that you know when we're horny?" Sirius teased.

"That's for me to know and you to find out!" Harry smirked mischievously.

"Moony, are you game on finding out just what vibes our pup is able to deduce with her empathy?" Sirius winked at the werewolf, moving towards his goddaughter.

"Don't you dare!" Harry gasped as Sirius grasped her around the waist.

"Nice move, Padfoot, I'll just take off her shoes while you hold her." Remus grabbed hold of Harry's legs, chuckling as he pulled off her shoes.

"No, please..." Harry begged unable to restrain her laughter. "Don't tickle my feet...Oh!" she cried as Remus ignored her.

"I just think I'll have a bit of fun too," Sirius whispered from behind as Harry struggled. "I rather like the tummy myself."

"No!" Harry shrieked, tears streaming down her cheeks, as she struggled to escape the two wizards. She was like putty in their grasp and could not stop laughing.

"Please...stop...I...I'm going...to wet...my pants!"

"Now what would Severus say to that!" Sirius chuckled merrily.

"Padfoot...please," she huffed struggling to catch her breath amid her laughter. "I give up!"

"Ah...the most powerful witch of the age and she succumbs to a little tickling." Remus pretended to sigh. "If Voldemort had only known..."

"That's not funny Moony," Harry admonished as the two men released her. "Believe it or not I have often wondered about what would have happened if he had known."

"You still would have stopped him," Sirius stated matter-of-factly. "You laugh now only because it is me and Remus. If Voldemort had even tried you would have gotten angry and then...WHAM! One less evil wizard."

"You two are incorrigible." Harry shook her head, pulling the two men into a hug. "I love you both very very much you know."

"We love you too, Princess."

"I know. You both would have sacrificed the other to make me happy. The only problem is it would never have worked. I would have known by your feelings of loss for one another."

"So you fell in love with the Potions Master," Sirius responded.

"I found my Soulmate," Harry corrected. "Just like you two found each other."

"Never forget that even though you are joining with Severus we will still always be there for you.".

"All you have to do is call," Moony added.

"I know, just like I will be there for the both of you too."

"Then I think it's time we all get this show on the road," Sirius piped up trying to hide the tears in his eyes. "Moony, have you seen my Navy blue dress robes?"

"They're in your closet right beside the ones you are planning on wearing tomorrow." The werewolf responded following Sirius from the room, pausing only to give Harry a quick wink.

She stood there grinning for a moment before picking up her shoes and following them from the room to find Phaedra. She had just had an idea to surprise the two men even more, not to mention that Harry couldn't wait to see the expressions on her friend's faces when they found out about Sirius and Remus...

Dumbledore returned an hour later with the necessary paperwork from the Ministry allowing the werewolf to marry. The Weasleys and Draco arrived as they were finishing with the signatures on the necessary documents. Harry greeted them warmly as they emerged from the floo.

"Harry are you nervous yet!" Hermione questioned excitedly hugging her friend.

"Yeah mate, if you are anything like I was you are probably quaking in your shoes," Ron quipped.

"Really, Weasley, you're talking to someone who faced off with the Dark Lord on numerous occasions," Draco sneered, careful not to call him weasel in front of his family. "I hardly think a marriage ceremony will be cause for nerves."

"Just you wait, ferret, I can't wait to see the look on your face the day before you and Ginny are married." Ron had no qualms about calling Draco a ferret. While their relationship was improving, they were still often at odds with one another, reminiscent of Sirius and Severus.

"Ron! Draco and I are not even engaged and it is none of your business how we handle our relationship," Ginny berated her brother.

"Yeah, well he had better remember you still have four brothers looking out for you!" Ron flushed.

"All of you stop it this instant!" Molly berated annoyed. "We are here to celebrate and I will not have any of you spoiling Harry and Severus' party tonight."

"Ah...Sorry Harry," Ron apologized. "I wasn't thinking."

"Honestly, Ron, you have got to learn to control your temper. Ginny is a grown woman and capable of making her own decisions." Hermione rolled her eyes at her husband, cuffing him on the back of his head.

"I said I was sorry!"

"It's okay, Ron, I am really enjoying see how things are getting back to normal," Harry chuckled. "And to answer your question I have had no time to really think about getting nervous. I am far too excited about Moony and Padfoot!"

"Moony and Padfoot," Fred questioned, "what do you mean?"

"They are getting married tonight!" Harry replied grinning from ear to ear as all heads swung in the direction of the two wizards.

"What!" All the guests exclaimed at once.

"This is marvelous news." Arthur smiled recovering himself. He quickly steered Molly over towards the other wizards to offer their congratulations. Harry could see Molly crying happily, while she hugged the two men.

"Well, cousin," Draco drawled offering his hand to Sirius, "I certainly never expected this. I wish you both the best."

"Oh this is just so wonderful," Hermione stated hugging Remus, "but what about the Ministry restrictions on werewolves getting married?"

"That has all been taken care of Hermione," Dumbledore reassured her. "The restrictions in the case of same sex Soulmates are different. I was able to push the paperwork through this afternoon."

"This is almost as big a surprise as the one you have for Mum and Dad," George quipped slapping his brother on the back.

"You have a surprise for us?" Molly asked suspiciously, looking at her twin sons.

"Oops, sorry bro I wasn't thinking."

"Actually...Mum...I..." Fred began.

"Was going to..." George continued.

"Tell you both..." Followed by Fred.

"Tomorrow," George finished.

"What is it? Are you two up to something?" Molly demanded.

"Now Mum...I know how emotional you can be," Fred stated looking over at George.

"I think you should tell her now, Fred," Bill Weasley spoke up. He had just finished offering his congratulations to Sirius and Remus.

"This should be most interesting," Severus remarked with a sneer.

"Molly, I think you had better sit down," Dumbledore said, blue eyes twinkling.

"Why do I get the feeling you and Bill are keeping something from me Albus?" Molly demanded. "You too, George. You aren't up to anything illegal are you?"

"Mum!" the twins gasped in unison.

"No, Molly, they have done nothing wrong," Dumbledore chuckled.

"George, what is going on?" Harry whispered. "I know you have to know. You and Fred are inseparable."

"You'll find out," he whispered back, grinning. "Just be ready for mum's reaction."

"Fred Weasley, I demand to know what it is you are not telling me!" Molly demanded anxiously. Fred gulped looking to George and Bill for help.

"Sorry, Fred, this time you're on your own," Bill told him winking slyly at George.

"Well, what is it Fred?" Molly's voice was growing shrill with worry.

"Son, whatever it is we are your parents. You should never be afraid to tell us anything," Arthur stated calmly, placing his arm around Fred's shoulders.

"Uh...Parvati and I are secretly married and we're having a baby," Fred replied in a rush, his face bright red.

Molly nearly fell off the chair in shock, her mouth gaping like a fish. She was looking from the twins to Bill and then Dumbledore. Ginny broke the stunned silence.

"Well, Mum, Mr. Chang was right. You are going to have your first grandchild from an unexpected source." She slapped her brother on the back with a grin. The others gathered round him offering their congratulations but Harry hurried over to Molly who remained seated.

"Molly," she said softly, taking the elder woman's hand, "this is a good thing. You need to show Fred that you support him."

"Harry is right, Molly," Dumbledore interceded. "You should be happy for Fred. Parvati is a fine young woman."

"But why didn't he tell me he was getting married? I'm his mother and what about her parents. Are they even aware of the marriage?"

"Mr. Patil is not speaking with either of his daughters. He wanted them to be wed in a traditional arranged marriage back in India. Apparently the two girls have other ideas and moved out right after they graduated last year," Dumbledore said sadly.

"Humph, as if my son is not good enough for his daughter!" Molly grunted regaining her composure. "Fred Weasley, you and George go and find my new daughter-in-law and her sister this instant. This is a gathering of friends and family and they should be here." Molly remarked, hands on her hips, giving Fred a weak smile.

"Yes Mum," Fred beamed.

"We'll be back in a jiffy!" George agreed and they both disappeared.

"This is certainly a day for celebration," Dumbledore stated happily.

The twins returned a few minutes later with Parvati and Padma and Molly mustered up her motherly instincts and hugged the two girls, as Parvati was welcomed as the second Mrs. Weasley of their generation. Harry noted Bill was keeping a low profile so his mother would not complain about his lack of a wife.

"So does anyone else have any good news?" Remus asked the group.

"I do," Hermione replied softly, looking over at Ron. "I was offered a job in the Department of Mysteries and have decided to accept it. I'm sorry, Headmaster, but I will be unable to return to Hogwarts in September."

"That is quite all right, my dear. I fully understand. It shouldn't be too difficult to find another librarian. I happen to know that Madam Pince is not happy with her retirement. I shouldn't have any trouble convincing her to return to us."

"Mione, why didn't you tell me?"

"I didn't want you to think you're dad got me the job."

"Actually, I didn't know a thing about it," Arthur remarked, "although I can't say I'm not pleased."

"We'll get to see each other at work too while I'm training!" Ron hugged her.

"So, Ginny, do you have any surprises you're not telling us about?" Harry chuckled, but her voice sounded shrill to her ears. A knot was forming in her stomach as Mr. Chang's predictions were all coming true. Severus could sense her anxiety and moved over to place a comforting arm around her waist.

"As a matter of fact, I do." the young redhead grinned. "Draco and I will be traveling abroad after I graduate next week. He has signed up for the exchange program within the Auror program and I have been offered a job as a foreign correspondent with the Prophet to follow the project."

"Ginny that's simply fabulous!" Hermione exclaimed. "You will get to see so many places and things."

"I guess Mr. Chang was right on the money again," Ginny laughed. "He said I would be doing a lot of traveling."

"He also said it would be with your husband!" Molly glanced shrewdly at Draco, who simply shrugged.

"In that case folks, let's get this celebration going!" Sirius announced. "I am starting to get hungry."

"Only you would think about food prior to your nuptials," Severus sneered.

"Who said I was talking about food?" Sirius quipped, giving Remus a wicked grin.

"Ahem," Tiberius cleared his throat nodding to where Phaedra was sitting listening quietly to the adults chatter. "I believe Harry and Phaedra have a surprise for the two of you."

"Is it time to show them Uncle? I sat still and behaved like you told me to."

"Yes, Phaedra, you can show them now," Tiberius responded.

"Come on, Aunt Harry!" She grabbed Harry by the hand and pulled her towards the door. "I want to show them what we did!"

The group followed into the hall and Phaedra led them towards the small sitting room. Harry was looking at Sirius and Remus unable to conceal a wicked smile. Opening the doors, everyone entered, unable to conceal their amusement. Harry and Phaedra had enlisted the aid of the house elves and decorated the room for a small wedding. Rather than the traditional wedding arch, she had conjured a doghouse. Padfoot and Moony were written across the entrance on a large bone. A chain connected to a pair of collars joined the names. The room was decorated with dogwood and Wolfsbane flowers that had been bloomed out of season by means of magic. A buffet table was laid out with roast beef, turkey, and ham sandwiches placed on dishes shaped like canines. A number of salads were placed in receptacles shaped as dog bowls. The desserts consisted of cookies cut into the shape of dog bones. A small wedding cake in the shape of a fire hydrant was topped with a large brown wolf beside a black dog.

"Princess, you and Phaedra have outdone yourselves!"

"I couldn't have asked for a better party than this!" Sirius added.

"We wanted to do something really special for you both," Phaedra cried gleefully. "I helped with the decorations and gave Aunt Harry the idea for the doggie treats."

"I designed the house and got the flowers with the help of the elves."

"Harry, this is a really great idea," Ginny stated looking around.

"I'm glad you all like it," Harry replied embarrassed.

"I think it's time we got on with the ceremony then," Dumbledore chuckled. "Especially since I do believe Phaedra would like to have some of those cookies."

"More likely you want to try them out Albus," Tiberius snorted as the wizards all took their seats.

"Severus would you act as our best man?" Sirius questioned motioning him forward to stand with them.

"I shall be most honored, Black," he responded going over to stand behind them.

"Do you have the rings?"

"Right here," he handed two plain gold bands to Severus to slip into his robe pocket.

"Then I shall begin," Dumbledore announced. He stood quietly for a moment looking out over the small group present before he smiled. "This is one of the happiest occasions among our world. The uniting of two wizarding Soulmates. These two young men have seen more than their share of hardship and yet their love for one another has never wavered. Gentlemen, if I may have your right hands please?" Harry followed with interest as Dumbledore bound their wrists together. "I join the two of you as is our custom to be united as one being until the end of your days. May your souls again find each other in the next life." Dumbledore then waved his hand over the rope and it glowed then vanished as if disappearing into their skin. "I believe you both have a set of vows you have written for one another?" Sirius and Remus nodded. Sirius then spoke.

"Remus, I will always be with you from this day onward. I will never hurt you and will protect you from those who would do you harm. I will be there to share the pain of your transformations and help you to heal when they are over. I'll also make sure you have an ample supply of Honeydukes best chocolate since you love it almost as much as me," he grinned and everyone watching chuckled. Harry was sure she could see Remus golden eyes twinkling with the prospect along with a few unshed tears.

"Ahem..." Remus cleared his voice. "Sirius I will be glad of your presence during my time of change with the full moon. We will run free and play, our hearts carefree and young once again as they were when we were boys. I will always be at your side, will relish in your barking laugh, and will help to soothe you when the dark days you have suffered resurface at night. As for that chocolate, I prefer the dark chocolate rather than the milk," the room exploded into laughter and Severus rolled his eyes.

"Severus, will you present the rings?" Dumbledore asked. Taking the rings from his pocket, he handed them to Dumbledore. "Sirius, if you will repeat after me as you place the ring on Remus finger?" He nodded and Dumbledore motioned to Harry. "Harry, if you will come up here please? When Sirius says his vow, you are to touch the ring with your wand to signify your blessing and consent within the Protectorship. You will then do the same for Remus." Harry came forward and stood beside Severus her wand ready. "Very well then let's begin. I Sirius, take you Remus, for my husband, as is allowed within our custom and granted by the witch whom we both protect." Sirius repeated the words after Dumbledore and when Harry touched the ring, it glowed a brilliant blue. The process was then repeated for Remus. "Gentlemen you may kiss your spouse." Dumbledore beamed, blue eyes twinkling. Molly Weasley could be heard sobbing softly and the others cheered and clapped as Sirius grabbed Remus and kissed him passionately.

"Hey you two, wait for later," Bill chuckled. The group then all came forward to hug and congratulate the two wizards.

"Tomorrow that will be us," Severus whispered in Harry's ear.

"Do I get some Honeydukes chocolate too?"

"Absolutely not, you can have the whole store," he smirked, dark eyes bright.

The party lasted long into the night and everyone had a wonderful time. Phaedra was a bit put out at first over Fred's having gotten married but Draco pulled her back to herself by telling her that George was still available even though he was with Padma. He had a sneaky suspicion that Padma was more interested in Bill anyway.

This was confirmed later on in the evening when he overheard Bill telling her that he and Fleur had all but broken up. Molly was getting used to the idea of becoming a grandmother and determined to teach Parvati how to knit. The couple was living in London over the store in Diagon Alley. She insisted that they should look for larger quarters and offered to have them stay at the Burrow since she had so much room.

Sirius and Remus were caught several times trying to sneak away to be alone but the twins were in rare form. There was no way that they would let the two remaining Marauders escape to their room early. Harry suspected they were planning a prank. This was confirmed when the guests left and they all retired for the night. They had magically charmed the bed and run invisible tubes out of the windows so that when the two men retired to consummate their marriage the March of Triumph blasted through the house bypassing the silencing charms. Harry couldn't stop laughing for ten minutes. Even Severus was amused but determined that no such thing would happen to him and Harry. Phaedra just thought it was a regular joke and no one bothered to tell her otherwise.

Harry climbed into bed wondering what her own wedding night would be like. She hoped it would be romantic and realized she was a bit anxious about having sex for the first time. She hoped it wouldn't be painful as she had heard it was for some girls. She really wanted to be with Severus and knew he wanted to be with her. Rolling over, she cuddled up to Phaedra, falling into a restless sleep. She awoke several times with the feeling someone else was in the room. She had a sense of an angry presence reaching out and kept dreaming that a fine silver mist was creeping out of the mirror. Finally, she looked around and decided it was just the shadows reflected off of the mirror combined with wedding jitters. Getting up, she grabbed her robe and covered the glass, never knowing that a pair of cold eyes glared back from the other side of the covered glass...

Chapter 6

The Formal Joining of Souls II

"Aunt Harry...Aunt Harry wake up! You and uncle Sev are getting married today!" Phaedra's high-pitched voice pierced the veil of Harry's foggy brain. "Come on, Aunt Harry." The little girl grinned lifting Harry's right eyelid bouncing boisterously on the bed as she shoved her face up against Harry's.

"Arrrggghhh..." Harry growled. "What time is it?"

"Ten o'clock. Uncle Sev said you should have a lie in today cause you'll be up late tonight. I don't know why but then Uncle Moony and Padfoot laughed."

"They would," Harry grumbled reaching for her glasses. 'They better not prank me on my wedding night. Come to think of it Fred and George better not either!' She mused as the memory of last nights magical music filled her brain.

"Aunt Harry why are your cheeks getting red?"

"Hmm...?" Harry rolled over distracted by Phaedra's question.

"I wanted to know why your cheeks are red. Do you have a fever?"

"What...no...I...uh...was just thinking about...uh...kissing your uncle."

"Why would you get all red from that? You kiss Uncle Sev all the time," Phaedra questioned, her brow knitted into a puzzled frown.

"Oh... I was just thinking about doing it in front of all those people at the wedding," Harry lied. 'I wonder how old Phaedra should be before I tell her about the birds and the bees. I know she's only seven but maybe I should ask Mrs. Weasley about explaining a few things. I have no idea if Circe ever explained anything about female menses. I read where it can start as young as nine. Mine were delayed because I was so undernourished but still started by almost sixteen.' Harry scrunched up her face thoughtfully.

"Aunt Harry what are you thinking about? You look funny."

"I'm just thinking about you and how you are growing up," Harry replied ruffling her blond curls. "Now how about you let me get into the shower. Then I can have a quick brunch before the hairdresser arrives and we have to start getting ready."

"Are you excited?"

"Yeah are you? It's not everyday you're a flower girl."

"I hope I don't forget to drop the rose petals."

"You won't and I'm sure everyone will say what a good job you did." Harry smiled as she climbed off the bed. Passing the mirror as she headed towards the bathroom she noted it was now uncovered. She couldn't suppress a shudder as a feeling of cold crept over her skin but the only thing in the mirror was her own reflection. Harry took her time in the shower the hot water helping to relax her anxiety. 'This must be those wedding jitters they all kept talking about yesterday.' She smirked to herself as she wrapped her body into a fluffy towel surveying her face in the bathroom mirror. 'Well Miss Potter, today is the first day of the rest of your life,' she thought. 'You have certainly earned it.' She grinned pulling out her contact lenses from the cabinet. Deftly putting them into her sparkling green eyes Harry smiled. Despite her restless night, she was truly happy and it showed. Discarding the towel, she secured her bathrobe and returned to the bedroom.

"What are you going to wear? Can I pick out your clothes?" Phaedra asked.

"I have decided not to get dressed till it's time to put on my gown and robes since I won't be going downstairs."

"How come? Don't you want to see Uncle Sev?"

"It's bad luck to see the groom before the wedding," Harry chuckled. "I think you should take a bath while I eat."

"Do I have to?" Phaedra pouted.

"Better now than later. We have a busy day. The ceremony is at three and the others will be here by twelve o'clock so the hairdresser can do our hair. It's already ten thirty."

"Okay but I better go and tell Uncle Sev and the others we will be staying up here."

"Good idea. Have them send up the others when they arrive. We will be having our day of beauty," Harry teased using Phaedra's favorite phrase for dressing up as the child skipped from the room. Summoning Winky, she ordered a tray of food and then turned her attention back to the mirror. Standing in front of it she no longer could feel anything unusual nodding with relief. Opening her bathrobe, she surveyed her naked form. "Not too bad," she muttered. Harry noted the firmness of her breasts and the slender curve of her hips. "I would have decent figure if it weren't for the scars old Tom left me with." She deftly ran a finger over the fine white lines crisscrossing her abdomen between her navel and the soft triangle of black hair covering her private parts. Another scar ran along her left side down onto her thigh. Despite all of Madam Pomfrey's ministrations, she could not heal all of Harry's scars from the final battle. "Poppy did the best she could," Harry remarked to her reflection closing her robe once again. "I just hope Severus isn't put off by them too much. Fine wedding night I'll have if he thinks they're disgusting," she sighed. Harry knew Severus was aware of her scars but she still felt self conscious and insecure. He had never actually seen them. A tray materialized on the small table near the hearth just as Phaedra returned. Flopping into a chair, she began to eat a slice of toast turning her attention to the child.

"Uncle Moony says 'Happy Wedding Day' and Uncle Padfoot said he will be up to see you in a little while. Uncle Sev said to tell you he loves you," Phaedra giggled.

"Well I love him too," Harry laughed.

"He said he would see you at the ceremony and wanted me to remind you to make sure you give his ring to Uncle Padfoot so all the rings are together. Headmaster Mr. Dumbledore has to put the spell on them before the ceremony."

"I won't forget. It is in the box on the night table."

"Can I see it?"

"Sure bring it here," Harry directed. Phaedra retrieved the small box and Harry opened it to reveal a gold band entwined with the pattern of a serpent."

"Does yours look the same?"

"Mine has a Phoenix on it and the silver rings for Sirius and Remus both have a Griffin. Each has an inscription inside."

"What do they say?"

"They're all different but you can read the one I put into your Uncle Sev's now if you want."

Phaedra carefully took the ring from the box and examined the inscription.

"Severus, the ever watchful serpent who fills my heart with the song of the Phoenix, Harry," she quoted. "What do the others say?"

"Mine says, 'Harry, the Phoenix whose song has filled my heart with joy resurrecting my soul from the darkness.' Remus' ring says, 'the Griffin with the cunning of the wolf, guardian of the Phoenix,' and Sirius' says, the Griffin with the fidelity of the dog, guardian of the Phoenix."

"I think that's nice."

"Yeah me too, Harry smiled, "now go and take your bath. You want to get your hair done don't you?"

"I'll be done in a jiffy! Today you are officially my aunt!"

"That's officially now get a move on or we'll be late for the wedding!" Harry laughed nudging her in the direction of the bathroom. A few minutes later Harry heard her splashing around in the water singing joyfully...

Tiberius was seeing to the last minute arrangements. The ladies would ride to the village in a coach drawn by the winged horses, the animals enchanted so that the Muggles would not see their wings. He was also putting the final additions on the bubble potion instructing the house elves on where to secret them. Fairy lights would decorate the gardens once it got dark and the ballroom was set up for a group of classical musicians. Dumbledore had also enchanted the ceiling to reflect the sky like the one in the Great Hall at Hogwarts. The Weasley twins had provided the fireworks. Extra house elves had been brought in from Hogwarts to assist in the preparations for the dinner feast and ball to follow.

Sirius, Remus and Severus were sitting in the library discussing the upcoming graduation ceremony and new term at Hogwarts. Each was reminiscing about their school days trying to kill time before having to change into their dress robes for the wedding. Sirius shifted uncomfortably in his chair somewhat distracted as he cast occasional surreptitious glances in Severus' direction. This was not lost on the Potions Master nor was the feigned innocent expression on Lupin's face. Severus was growing increasingly annoyed sensing that Black had something other than school business or former pranks on his mind.

"Black you are more up tight than an Erumpent during mating season," the Potions Master scowled, "and Lupin can't keep a straight face every time he looks at you. It's not as if your wedding night was a new experience for either of you so what is going on?" Severus arched his brow with a sneer.

"Severus I believe Sirius wants to discuss something with you pertaining to Harry," Remus snickered studying the ceiling.

"Harry? What is wrong with her? Is she ill?"

"No. She's fine as far as I know and I want her to stay that way," Sirius remarked studying his former rival intently.

"Why shouldn't she? Has there been any news of the few missing Death eaters?"

"This has nothing to do with any type of threat. As far as I know the Aurors have no new leads and Harry is safe."

"Then what are you talking about!" Severus questioned growing more annoyed.

"Severus I think Sirius wants to have a little chat with his goddaughter's prospective bridegroom," Remus stated calmly.

"What the devil are you both talking about?" Severus looked between the two men.

"Sev as Harry's godfather I feel it is my duty to... well...remind you that she's a virgin."

"I am well aware of Harry's innocence Black. What are you getting at?"

"I just wanted to make sure you take it slow later on tonight. If I thought for one minute that you were in any way rough with her I would hex you into oblivion," Sirius glared protectively.

"First of all, Black, what Harry and I do in the privacy of our bedroom is none of your business. Secondly, if you had one iota of common sense you would realize that I would never do anything to hurt her!" Severus exclaimed crossing his arms with an angry scowl.

"Severus calm down. Sirius is just nervous and concerned about Harry. He knows you love her but felt it was his obligation as her godfather to have a little prenuptial chat with you."

"Humph, he practically accused me of wanting to rape her."

"I apologize Snape; I just don't want Harry to remember her first time in a negative way. You know as well as I do that for some young women their first time is painful. I guess I got a bit carried away worrying about how she will react," Sirius explained sheepishly.

"I accept your apology but you needn't have been concerned. I would never be rough with Harry nor would I ask her to do anything she finds distasteful."

"Now that the two of you have settled your apparent concerns I suggest we go and say hello to Hermione and Ginny. I can hear them in the hall talking with Dobby along with Molly Weasley. They arrived just as you were finishing your discussion," Remus said casually. The three men quickly rose to go and greet their guests before the ladies went up to join Harry and Phaedra...

Harry was helping Phaedra to dry her hair when there was a knock on the bedroom door. Getting up she opened it to find Molly and her friends beaming at her.

"Harry dear," Molly said sweeping her into a motherly hug, "this is going to be one of the happiest days of your life and I am so thrilled to be a part of it."

"Geeze, Mum, give the poor girl a chance to breathe," Ginny giggled.

"Are you nervous yet Harry?" Hermione asked.

"She's all excited. Me too!" Phaedra babbled racing over to hug everyone hello.

"I'm sure you will do a wonderful job today Phaedra." Molly beamed hugging the child.

"I take it the hairdresser hasn't arrived yet?" Hermione observed.

"I'm sure she'll be here in a little while. Do you all have your gowns?"

"Dobby took them to make sure they didn't need a last minute pressing," Ginny answered. "It must be nice to have the elves to help around the house."

"Ginny! You know how I feel about keeping house elves," Hermione interjected.

"Mione we pay Dobby and Winky. The others were here before I came and seem quite happy. They have served the Snapes for generations and wouldn't understand if we tried to free them and give them clothes."

"I know but it just seems so unjust."

"Well I for one wouldn't mind having even a paid elf," Ginny remarked. "Is this the mirror you bought in Diagon Alley Phaedra?" she questioned studying her reflection.

"Yes, isn't it beautiful?"

"It looks positively ancient. Do you know anything about it?" Hermione asked coming up behind her sister-in-law.

"All the man said was that it was part of an estate. It was in terrible shape when we found it in the shop," Molly replied. "Now that it is cleaned up I believe it may be some kind of antique."

"Is that a name or something?" Phaedra queried.

"No dear. An antique is a very old and valuable article."

"My mirror is worth money?"

"It may be if your uncle can learn anything more about it," Molly said dismissing the subject. The mirror made her feel decidedly uncomfortable. She was saved from further comment by another knock on the door and hurried over to open it for Harry.

"Molly I believe these are your gowns," Sirius stated jovially, entering the room. "I intercepted Dobby on his way and decided to bring them up myself."

"Sirius, Phaedra said you would be up." Harry grinned at her godfather who was leaning in the doorframe.

"I wanted to wish my best girl good morning on the happiest day of her life. In a few hours I'll be lucky if I can even get a word in edgewise."

"Don't be silly." Harry hugged him. "I plan on dancing with you and Moony tonight and we will all be seated together at dinner."

"Ahh...but you will only have eyes for him. Old Padfoot will be neglected," he joked.

"Don't worry, Sirius, I'm sure Harry will sneak you a few scraps under the table," Ginny teased referring to his animagus form.

"Harry, how do you ever keep him under control?" Hermione rolled her eyes.

"He has been difficult to house break but we're getting there." They all broke up laughing. "Where's Moony?" Harry questioned glancing around him into the hallway.

"Taking a cold shower. All this romance was getting to him."

"Right...where is he really?"

"In a cold shower. I charmed the spigots to keep him under control," Sirius responded mischievously as a loud oath suddenly erupted from down the hall in their room. "Oops...I better go. I think he is planning a counter attack. I'll see you at the ceremony love." He quickly glanced over his shoulder before kissing Harry and darting down the hall. "Sirius Black, you come back here!" Remus voice exclaimed as he burst from their room chasing Sirius down the hall wearing nothing but a towel. They all erupted into peals of laughter at the sight as Harry swiftly closed the door.

"You don't think he'll hurt him do you?" Hermione questioned once she caught her breath.

"Nah...He'll just think of some prank to get even later," Harry giggled.

"Remind me to tell Remus what nice legs he has later, will you?" Ginny grinned while Molly glared at her disapprovingly.

Harry just winked at her friend as they were interrupted once again by the arrival of the hairdresser. The next few hours were spent happily chatting as the beautician worked her magic and the girls donned their wedding attire. Arthur would meet Molly downstairs and they planned to apparate to the ceremony together. Ginny and Hermione had talked her into surprising her husband. They knew he would be

pleased when he saw how lovely she looked. Harry waited patiently once the others were ready. She still had to put on her own gown and robes having only donned her underclothes.

"Harry why aren't you putting on your clothes?" Hermione asked.
"We've been waiting all day to see you in them."

"I asked Harry to wait and that I would help her. She's as much my daughter as Ginny and I also want to have a few minutes alone with her before we leave."

"Uh oh," Ginny whispered, "I think Mum wants to have a sex talk."

"Great," Harry blushed. "So what do I do?"

"Just go along with her. It will make her really happy."

"Right," Harry whispered back.

"Why don't you three wait downstairs for Arthur? Harry and I will be down in a few minutes," Molly directed.

"Good luck," Ginny mouthed with a wink behind Molly's back as she left the room with Hermione and Phaedra.

As soon as Molly was certain they were downstairs, she turned to Harry.

"Let me help you with your gown dear," the elder witch stated taking Harry's gown and robes from the garment bag hanging by the closet.

"Thank you Mrs. Weasley." Harry allowed her to help her dress, slipping on her shoes before pulling on the matching cloak. They looked in the mirror together and Molly couldn't hide the tears.

"You look radiant," she sniffed putting an arm around Harry's shoulders. "You may not have come from my own womb but I couldn't love you more if you had."

"I know Molly." Harry looked down at her hands suddenly finding them quite interesting. "I...love...you too," she stuttered shyly. Molly hugged her gently kissing her cheek.

"Now before we go I just want to have another small word with you," Molly said calmly. Harry looked up nervously. "I think you probably know all about the birds and the bees so I won't go into the specifics. I just want you to know that well...sometimes...a girl's first time can be a bit uncomfortable."

"Was yours?" Harry blurted feeling her face grow crimson.

"Let's just say that Arthur was very considerate of my needs," Molly responded her face a red as Harry's. "I am sure that Severus is more than a little experienced in these matters. He loves you very much Harry. Trust him to know what to do."

"I do," Harry answered, unable to meet Molly's eyes. "I just hope I will know what to do."

"Don't worry, you will. Trust your instincts," Molly stated amused. "Now I think it's time we got going. You don't want to be late. I'm sure..." she was interrupted by a soft knock on the door. "Who is it?"

"It is only me, Molly," Dumbledore's soft voice responded. "Arthur is here. May I come in?"

"Of course Albus." Molly swung open the door allowing him admittance. "We were just getting ready to leave."

"May I have a moment with Harry? I have decided to accompany her in the coach for added security."

"Certainly. Is there a problem?"

"No but the press is there and with such a large crowd gathering I felt it might be prudent."

"I understand. I'll just go on ahead then with Arthur."

Dumbledore nodded turning his attention to Harry while Molly headed off to find her husband.

"My dear if I were seventy years younger..." He beamed blue eyes sparkling like sapphires behind his half moon spectacles. "You look beautiful." He embraced her affectionately kissing her forehead.

"Thank you." Harry beamed back, green eyes locking with blue, her smile reaching her eyes. "I like your robes." He was wearing silver blue decorated with silver lightening bolts.

"I felt they were appropriate to the occasion," he chuckled warmly. "I need Severus' ring Harry. Sirius forgot to retrieve it before. I didn't quite understand his explanation. He kept muttering something about a wolf and a towel." His blue eyes were twinkling merrily.

"Trust me when I tell you that the Marauders were in rare form this morning," she chuckled handing him the box from the nightstand.

"Then I know this will definitely be a day to remember," he laughed. Taking his wand from within his robes, he placed all the rings in front of him. Muttering a spell under his breath, he tapped each ring in succession. A brilliant blue glow emanated from them before fading with a shower of white sparks.

"You have got to teach me some of those spells."

"This is ancient magic, Harry, and as soon as I feel you are ready I will begin teaching all four of you."

"Cool," she grinned.

"I believe we have kept the others waiting long enough. Severus will be in a rather anxious state if we are late." He offered her his arm leading her from the room.

"Actually he will probably say something like, 'Late as usual, Potter. Did no one ever teach you about punctuality?' Then he would give one of his famous glares at you thinking, 'Damn Albus' blue eyes. I hate that infernal twinkle,' and we'll all laugh cause for once in his life he will have forgotten to occlude his mind." Dumbledore threw back

his head laughing at her impersonation of the young wizard as they made their way down the stairs. Half way down, they were met with several gasps. Ginny and Hermione were smiling broadly. Phaedra was staring up at them, brown eyes wide with delight.

"Aunt Harry you look so beautiful. Uncle Sev is going to faint."

"I don't think he'll faint, Phaedra, but I think he will be at a loss for words," Hermione remarked sensibly.

"Either that or he will skip the reception to whisk Harry off somewhere private," Ginny teased. "Somehow I don't think he is going to want to be away from her for long."

"Thanks and I should say the same for you and Mione."

"What about me?" Phaedra demanded.

"You, Little One, will give young Weasley's date a run for her money," Dumbledore told her affectionately, escorting them from the manor.

Phaedra, Ginny and Hermione took the lead coach while Dumbledore and Harry were in the second. Once settled they headed off down the long drive towards the road to the village. Harry looked out the window with interest. The local people lined the streets waving handkerchiefs. She noticed that the wizarding folk had attached them to their wands disguising them as small flags. Harry was excited and nervous at the same time, unconsciously twisting the engagement ring on her finger. The closer they got to the church the more anxious she became. Dumbledore gently placed a hand on her head and muttered a calming spell when they arrived. The girls entered the building first, the Aurors and local police keeping the crowds back. Dumbledore then assisted her from the coach amid camera flashes and excited reporters. As they entered the Knave, she spotted a beetle hanging on a large tapestry out of the corner of her eye but Dumbledore had already seen it.

"Rita Skeeter I suggest you transform back immediately before I take measures to assure you are removed from the premises," Dumbledore warned coldly. He was staring directly at the beetle, blue eyes like fire.

"I apologize, Dumbledore, but this is big news," she answered returning to her human form. "As a member of the press..."

"Leave the building now or you will never write another word," he warned. "I will not have one of our most ancient ceremonies disrupted. This ceremony is by invitation only."

Rita looked cowed and headed back towards the door. Harry knew she could feel the angry waves of magic coming from the Headmaster.

"Rita wait one moment," Harry called softly causing the witch to turn back. "If you leave your photographer outside and promise to only print a factual account of the ceremony and stay clear of the reception I will allow you in."

"Dumbledore?" She looked at the ancient wizard for confirmation.

"Do Harry and I have your word that you will do as she asks?"

"I will," she replied without hesitation. "This ceremony is the scoop of the century. Besides I am not fool enough to try and breech the wards at the castle later on."

"Very well then, take a seat in the back of the room and be quick about it." She slid into the back of the church without another word.
"Are you sure about this Harry?"

"If she's inside at least you can keep an eye on her. I may not like the woman but when she does print the truth she does a good job."

"I agree," he smiled. "Now I believe the others are waiting." He glanced into the inner room. "I shall take my place and then you and Phaedra may enter." He hugged her one last time and disappeared up the center aisle.

"Aunt Harry I'm scared," Phaedra whispered.

"Me too," Harry winked. "Just look up ahead and don't forget to drop your petals."

"I won't." Phaedra turned with a determined look on her face as the music stopped for one moment before changing to the traditional wedding march. "Go ahead." Harry nudged her gently as the onlookers rose.

Once Phaedra was partway down the aisle, Harry appeared within the archway. Taking a deep breath she looked around before starting down. Hermione and Ginny were standing up front behind Dumbledore. Draco and Ron flanked them on either side, resplendent in their Auror dress robes. Remus and Sirius were standing on opposite sides of the aisle facing one another, their heads turned to look at her. Sirius had the biggest grin she ever saw while Remus' eyes were glowing proudly, a boyish smile lighting up his features. Their dress robes were dark red trimmed with gold to signify their former Hogwarts house, which offered the protection of the Griffin. It briefly registered in Harry's mind that the Weasleys were in the front pew reserved for family. Arthur's arm was around his wife's shoulders to keep her from crying. Tiberius was also in the first pew but on the opposite side, signifying he was the groom's closest relative. Hagrid was in the second row behind the Weasleys, sitting next to the Dursleys. Her Aunt Petunia's horse like face was strait but her lip was twitching slightly. Uncle Vernon seemed subdued but there was a calculating look in his eyes. Dudley just seemed bored. Her friends and the other members of the Order were scattered about the church along with the rest of the family members.

Harry took all this in quickly as she made her way forward before locking eyes on Severus. At that moment, everyone else became a blur on the edge of her mind. His tall straight form awaited her arrival at the top of the aisle just below where Dumbledore stood on the alter platform. His dark eyes were glittering, a smile at the corners of his lips, as he drank in her appearance. Harry smiled back. His dress robes were in his traditional style but were a dark shimmering silver gray trimmed in green satin. The Snape family crest was embroidered on the right side. Harry was pleased he was not wearing black.

As Harry reached Sirius and Remus, she was vaguely aware that Phaedra had slipped into the pew beside Tiberius. Stopping between the two wizards, they each kissed her briefly telling her how beautiful she looked before she stepped forward beside Severus. Sirius and

Remus turned to stand behind them as Sev took her arm and they faced Dumbledore.

"Welcome everyone," the headmaster greeted, "we are here today for a wonderful and solemn occasion. However, before I begin the final Rites of Union between Harry and Severus I have another happy announcement to make." His blue eyes were twinkling furiously as he looked at Remus and Sirius. "Last night in a private ceremony with the consent of Harry, Sirius Black and Remus Lupin were joined in wedlock under the rules of the Protectorship and will be sharing in today's festivities. They were not able to have many of you present as their decision to marry was only made yesterday and there was not enough time to notify everyone. Please welcome the happy couple."

The room burst out with much applause and Harry could hear Sirius grandmother and Cousin Andromeda sobbing happily. Remus' parents also seemed genuinely happy. She was also aware of a snort coming from her Uncle Vernon. 'I'll bet that went over really well,' she thought pursing her lips in amusement. 'I wonder if Uncle Vernon is turning purple yet.'

"Now let us begin the ceremony," Dumbledore continued once the excitement had died down. "It is my pleasure as a Senior Mage and Keeper of the Trust for the Protectorship to perform the Formal Rites of Union for these two young people. I have watched them both grow up and did my best to aid them in their moments of darkness. May the rest of their lives be filled with happiness and light. Remus and Sirius will you please step forward and accept the Rings of Guardianship?"

"I will," they answered in unison.

"Then repeat after me one at a time beginning with Sirius. I, Sirius Black, godfather and protector of Harry James Potter do hereby declare my fealty. I will continue to guard her and offer my protection for the duration of my life. I will also stand ready to defend Severus Snape, the protector she has chosen to join in wedlock under our ancient laws." Sirius followed Dumbledore's instruction without a flaw and gave Harry a wink. "Harry will you and Severus place the silver

ring on Sirius' left hand please?" They both did as instructed and Harry could feel a brief energy charge.

"All ready Remus?" Dumbledore smiled. Remus nodded grinning happily.

"I Remus Lupin, friend, teacher, and protector of Harry James Potter do hereby declare my fealty. I will continue to guard and protect her for the duration of my life. I too will stand ready to defend Severus Snape, the protector she has chosen to join with in wedlock under our ancient laws," Remus recited calmly, golden eyes shining.

Harry and Severus placed the ring on Remus finger and she was met with another brief burst of energy. 'I wonder if Severus can feel the energy from the spells too?' she mused as Remus and Sirius resumed their positions behind them.

"Severus Snape do you hereby swear your fealty as the Protector of Harry James Potter and accept her hand in wedlock as your wife?" Dumbledore asked.

"I do."

"Harry James Potter do you accept the protection of Severus Snape and accept his hand in wedlock as your lawfully wedded husband?"

"I do."

"Then join hands and recite your vow to one another."

"Harry I have watched you grow from a frightened child to a beautiful young woman. I was not always kind or generous to you and often unjustly criticized you. Yet, you kept trying to understand me and only offered kindness. I buried myself in an icy shield but somehow you were able to break through to find the soul I had thought lost. I will never hurt or wrong you again. Always remember that I love you even if I do not state it often enough. I will love and guide you through the rest of my life."

"Severus when I first met you I thought you cold and mean, yet you were always watching out for me. You saved my life more times than

I dare to count. Somehow, I knew that the image you projected was nothing more than a façade to protect yourself from the hurt and loss in your life. You were a man who had forgotten how to hope for anything better, yet you turned away from the darkness, which threatened to consume you. I understood your pain of loss and loneliness despite your desire to punish yourself for your past wrongs. I took a step and reached out to you. Even though you hesitated, you reached back. I knew what ghosts lurked inside of your heart and determined to vanquish them. I hope I will always continue to do so for hidden beneath those years of anger and pain I found a warm, kind, loving human being. I love you."

Molly Weasley was sobbing openly now and silent tears were running down Hermione's face. Ginny's lower lip trembled and Hagrid's sobbing echoed through the entire building. Harry heard Remus whisper to Sirius.

"We did a good job Padfoot."

"Yeah, Moony, we sure did," he whispered back, voice husky with emotion.

"Severus will you and Harry place your rings on one another and then join hands with Remus and Sirius." They did so and once again. Harry was aware of the magical energy they contained. Then Dumbledore waved his wand over them. The golden ropes appeared in a blaze of light connecting them all once more before fading. However, Harry and Severus' rings were glowing a bright blue. "By the power invested in me as Head Wizard of the Wizengamot and Keeper of the trust I now pronounce you husband and wife. Kiss your bride Severus." Dumbledore beamed with enthusiasm.

Harry looked up at Sev and he met her eyes, taking her into his arms. Their lips met in a passionate kiss. As they did so, Harry could feel the energy surge from her ring through out her entire body. She knew he felt it too. They broke apart to cheers and clapping, making their way back down the aisle. Tears of joy glittered in her eyes and the church bells pealed out to announce to the people waiting outside that the marriage of the Viscount was concluded.

Harry and Severus waited patiently on the receiving line to greet their friends and family members. Everyone was hugging, laughing, and shaking hands. Even the Dursleys seemed to be on their best behavior. Although her Uncle seemed nervous when shaking Severus hand and Aunt Petunia's hug was forced. Harry ignored it though and just as they were getting ready to leave for the coaches, her jaw dropped in shock.

Sirius was staring at Severus with a strange look in his eye and Severus was looking back. They both looked over at Harry when Sirius shrugged and giving a wicked grin grabbed Severus into a huge bear hug.

"Sev, I might be a right bastard at times but I want you to know I meant what I said in there. If you're what makes my goddaughter happy then you're all right in my book."

"My god, hell must be freezing over." Ron gaped.

"Don't be silly, Ron, they all just love Harry. She's what made them all realize they were acting like children," Hermione admonished. "Isn't that right, Harry?"

"Harry?" Ron shook her shoulder to get her attention.

"Uh...Hermione...I think Ron was right. Sev is hugging him back!"

The wedding attendants all erupted into raucous laughter at the expression on Harry's face. Severus merely took her arm, calmly escorting her to their carriage for the ride back to the castle. Ignoring the reporters, he nodded to the well-wishers in a dignified manner before helping her inside. As the carriage drove off, he threw back his head laughing at his bride's still dazed expression before gathering Harry into his arms kissing her passionately.

Chapter 7

Parties Pranks Partners and Passions

It was five o'clock by the time all of the guests who had been invited to the actual ceremony returned to the castle. More guests were expected for the ball later on in the evening, which was set to begin at eight. Most of these were dignitaries from the Ministry and members of the Wizengamot as well as the local wizarding Mayor and his village council. Harry sighed. She hadn't wanted all this. However, she knew it was necessary since Severus' family was so prominent in the community.

Once again, amid a sea of hugs and kisses, Harry found herself welcoming the guests from the ceremony who had been invited for the dinner feast. Severus stood beside her, a light flush on his high cheekbones, occasionally offering an amused smile in her direction, dark eyes glittering with desire, all the while accepting the congratulatory remarks with dignity and his usual aplomb.

Dumbledore's blue eyes were twinkling brighter than Harry had ever thought possible while Tiberius Snape, as the Snape family patriarch, stood beside him proudly. Sirius was his usual boisterous self, ready to be the life of the party, as he and Remus accepted congratulations for their union and new role as guardians of the Protectorship. Remus looked happier and healthier than anyone had seen him in a long time, discreetly holding his lover's hand. Phaedra was running around amongst the crowd enjoying the praise and compliments she received for doing such a good job as flower girl. The Dursleys appeared nervous but remained polite. However, they remained reserved towards the wizards surrounding them. Harry's friends were chattering merrily with their former teachers and the members of the Order. It was with a sigh of relief when the house elves opened the doors to the main dining hall for the feast to begin.

Harry and Severus were seated facing the door at the center of the table. Sirius was on her right while Remus was seated on Severus' left. Dumbledore was at one end of the long table with Tiberius facing him on the opposite side. Hermione and Ron sat next to Sirius. Ginny and Draco were next to Remus. Professor McGonagall and her new

husband, Dr. McBride, were seated facing Harry and Severus. Professor Sprout and Madam Pomfrey sat on either side of them. The rest of their friends, family, and Order members were dispersed though out the table. Harry noted that Phaedra was seated by Tiberius along with the Longbottoms. Dumbledore sat with her Aunt and Uncle. Dudley was sitting nearby next to Seamus and Dean. Molly, Arthur and Bill sat facing opposite them. Molly was doing her best to make Dudley feel comfortable while glaring at the wicked looks Dudley was receiving from the twins. Dean was talking to Dudley about the West Ham football team. Cho Chang was sitting with her grandfather. Mr. Ollivander was enthraling Phaedra with tales about Hogwarts. Everyone in the room came to attention when Dumbledore tapped lightly on his glass.

“Now that we are all seated I think that before we eat young Mr. Malfoy, Severus’ godson and Mr. Ronald Weasley, Harry’s best friend have both prepared a toast. Draco, if you would?” Dumbledore nodded for him to stand as the glasses filled with champagne. Harry noted with satisfaction that for once her uncle went slightly pale rather than purple.

“Severus, I hope that you and Harry will be very happy together. No one knows better than me how much I owe to you both. If it had not been for you and Harry, I never would have been able to stand up to my father. I would probably be in Azkaban by now if not worse. May Merlin bless you both with lots of little Slytherins,” he chuckled looking at Ron, who scowled back as he rose from his chair.

“Harry, we have had some great times together along with Hermione. You always stood by us both no matter what. You have a gift for seeing the good in others. Even when I was blind to it, you saw Professor Snape for the good man he really is. If anyone had told us a few years ago that the two of you would be married and I would be toasting you both with Draco we would have hexed them. May you both find the happiness together that you have waited for and fill this castle with lots of little Gryffindors!” He grinned back at Draco while ripples of laughter ran along the table as everyone drank up.

“Tiberius as head of the House of Snape have you anything to say?” Dumbledore addressed him with a nod.

Tiberius rose with one graceful movement.

"How do you two do that?" Harry whispered to Severus inclining her head in Tiberius direction.

"Perhaps one day I shall teach you," he whispered back amused, as the champagne glasses magically refilled and Tiberius addressed the room.

"It has been a long time since the House of Snape has rung with the laughter and happiness that my lovely new niece has brought to it. You have done well nephew. May these walls continue to ring with the love you both share and may rainbows always surround you." With a flick of his wrist, a rainbow appeared arching over the table.

"Thank you, uncle." Severus inclined his head. Harry blushed and smiled demurely.

"My dear as the new lady of the house do you have anything to say?" Dumbledore queried. Twinkling blue eyes met sparkling green ones, each with a hint of mischief.

"A very wise old man once said these words and I have never forgotten them. So, judging by the way Phaedra is wiggling impatiently and Ron's stomach is rumbling," she chuckled, "*Nitwit! Blubber! Oddment! Tweak!*" The room erupted into laughter, Dumbledore's ringing above the rest as he remembered Harry's sorting feast.

"Let the feast begin," he added through his laughter.

All kinds of succulent dishes appeared before them. The house elves had outdone themselves. Harry was amused to see Dudley's piggy eyes bulge and her aunt gave a nervous squeak while Albus patted her hand reassuringly. Uncle Vernon gave Harry a calculating look but began to help himself when Severus met his eyes with an infamous glare.

"He's up to something," Harry said quietly.

"Do not concern yourself. I will handle it," Severus stated firmly. Harry merely nodded knowing he would not budge on the issue and turned her attention to Sirius.

"Sirius, how come the silver ring is not affecting Remus? I meant to ask you earlier." She indicated their rings of guardianship.

"Because my beloved goddaughter, they are not silver. They're actually white gold and yours and Severus' are platinum."

"Ah...I should have realized it was something like that." She rolled her eyes.

"Princess, you are the most beautiful bride I have ever seen."

"Thanks Moony."

"I believe she is even lovelier than Lily. What do you think Padfoot?"

"Hmm...Let's see..." He screwed up his face critically but Harry could see his eyes laughing. "Can't say for certain, Moony, but I think you may be right." Harry knew he was teasing and did not rise to the bait.

"I have seen those wedding pictures you know. Mum was a far nicer looking woman than I am. I'll bet she hexed my dad when I inherited his hair too."

"Painfully so," Sirius laughed. "She charmed his shorts two sizes too small. If it hadn't been for your disguise as a boy it would probably have been worse."

"Ewww..."

"Padfoot, I am sure Harry does not wish to hear about James' private parts."

"True. She would probably prefer to hear about Sev's." He grinned down at her wickedly.

"I don't have to," she whispered, "I saw quite a bit in that pensive scene in fifth year. I'm quite pleased, actually." Harry gave him a

punch in the arm, green eyes glittering with a wickedness of their own, letting Sirius wonder if she had actually seen Severus totally stripped naked. She didn't miss Severus' snort of enjoyment that the Marauder's obnoxious behavior had been turned against him.

"Draco what will you be studying when you go abroad?" Harry inquired turning towards the young blond.

"I will be learning international wizarding law and variations of hexes and curses according to language. Apparently some spells have been altered according to the native language."

"Ooo...I have heard about that," Hermione interrupted with interest.
"Can you send me some reference books?"

"I should just open a library," Ron moaned. "If she keeps this up we won't have enough room for any kids later on. She has already turned the back room into her study."

"Ron! It would do you some good to study some more. You want to pass your Auror exams with a good score don't you?" Hermione admonished. "If you had studied a little harder you might have made the international Auror exchange training program also."

Harry just laughed as they began to bicker.

"Don't worry, Ron, I'll make sure Draco sends plenty of Quidditch books too," Ginny called to her brother.

"How is the shop doing Fred?" Sirius inquired helping himself to a generous portion of roast beef.

"We are reopening the Hogsmeade branch the last week in August. Have to get the Hogwarts student business. Can't leave them with nothing to do between Quidditch matches."

"Yeah, wait till you see our newest feature," George winked at the former Marauder.

"You two had better not have brought any of your wild projects here!" Molly warned. "If I so much as see either of you..."

"Molly I'm sure Fred and George will be on their best behavior," Harry interceded. "Besides, I don't think they would want to incur their former Professor's wrath." She glanced over towards Severus who was in the middle of a conversation with his godson and Dumbledore.

"Absolutely not," George agreed.

"If it weren't for Professor Snape we would never have been able to invent many of our products," Fred added.

"His potions expertise has been one the things which helped with many our crowning achievements," George said grinning at his brother.

"I hardly call skiving snack boxes a crowning achievement," Severus remarked without turning his head before continuing his conversation with Dumbledore.

"Ahh...our mentor. I wish I knew how he does that," George groaned. Everyone laughed while Severus casually turned his head to stare at the twins. "Potions was our favorite class."

"Considering you both hold the record for my detentions I can't imagine why."

"Do they really, Sev? I thought it was me." Harry nudged him playfully.

"No, you hold the record for cauldron scrubbing. I liked to give them more inventive punishments." He smirked.

Fred and George just grinned wider and gave him a thumbs up.

"So true...so true," they sighed in unison.

"Don't you," Fred began.

"Just miss," George continued.

"Mixing all those," Fred again.

"Combustibles!" they finished together flinging their arms about one another.

"Severus you didn't!" Molly gasped.

"Nothing so serious as they would have been gravely injured Molly. However, knowing their penchant for pranks they needed to learn the consequences of mixing various ingredients together." He looked pointedly at the grinning mischief-makers.

"And so we did," Fred concurred.

"Humph, they got to do something interesting. All I ever got was dish panned hands." Harry pretended to pout.

"My dear you already had dish panned hands," Severus replied glaring at Petunia. "I am glad that I had a salve which was able to heal them." He gently picked up her hands and kissed each one.

"Aunt Petunia how is the front garden doing? I really miss working on it," Harry questioned truthfully.

"The roses are doing well but the chrysanthemums seem to be wilting. I can't seem to figure out why. You didn't do any well...er...you know what on them to make them bloom better."

"No, Aunt, there was no magic involved." Petunia winced at the words. "Try giving them some additional water and plant food. It also helps to talk to your plants and tell them how nice they look." Her aunt looked at Harry as if she had two heads. 'She probably is wondering what the neighbors would think if they saw her talking to the flowers,' Harry thought amused.

"Yes... well...we will look into that," Vernon added in an attempt at civility. "Nice place you have here, uh...Severus. Very nice indeed."

"It has been our home for many generations," Severus answered meeting his eyes with a shrewd expression. 'Amazing the audacity of this Muggle,' he mused legitimizing him. 'He has the awareness of a slug. Even Crabbe and Goyle could have done better.'

"Maybe you could give us a tour of the place later on?" Vernon inquired trying to sound pleasant.

"Unfortunately, I do not believe today would be a good idea. Another time perhaps?"

"Yes...yes...I fully understand. It was remiss of me to ask. After all today is a special day." Vernon winked with a surreptitious look at Harry making her skin crawl. Severus casually draped his arm around her shoulders sensing her discomfort.

"Headmaster," Ginny interrupted to divert the conversation to more pleasant topics, "when will the N.E.W.T scores be available?"

"As a matter of fact they went out yesterday Miss Weasley. I didn't get a chance to deliver them earlier but I have yours with me." He reached into his robes pulling out a thick envelope.

"Oh my..."she gasped.

"Open them Gin and see how you did," Harry encouraged.

"Ginny got her N.E.W.T.'s!" Hermione announced excitedly.

"What exactly are newts?" Vernon questioned. "Aren't they some kind of animal?"

Dumbledore explained briefly while Ginny opened the envelope with shaking fingers. A moment later, her face broke out into a broad grin.

"Well, Ginny dear, how did you do?"

"Looks like I'll get to graduate, Mum," she replied. "I passed everything!"

"How did you do in Potions?" Harry asked curiously.

"I got an Acceptable but it wasn't something I need to be a writer. I did better on the written than the practical." She passed the scores down for her friends and family to see. "I did the best in DADA and Charms."

The guests continued to chatter about Ginny's scores as the plates were cleared and the desserts served. Harry was delighted to see her

favorite treacle tarts and munched happily. She did note however, that Dudley had some of everything on top of the huge meal he had eaten.

"It's a wonder he doesn't make himself ill," Severus remarked softly as they finished their coffee and tea. "No wonder he resembles a killer whale." He frowned with disgust.

"I was starved and he was stuffed," Harry replied offhandedly. "I sometimes wonder which of us actually was worse off."

"I don't," Sirius stated firmly from beside her.

"Nor do I," Severus agreed as the guests prepared to leave the feast.

Harry excused herself for a few minutes along with the other ladies to go to the bathroom and refresh herself while the men opted for some brandy. As she came back downstairs, she spotted her aunt standing near the door to Severus' study wringing her hands nervously. Petunia was pretending to listen to Molly Weasley who was offering her some recipes but every now and then, she would glance at the door of the study. Harry was about to go over to them when the door opened and Severus emerged with Vernon Dursley. Her uncle was smiling with an expression that reminded her of a Doxy getting ready to bite. At the same time, she spotted Dudley with Sirius, Remus, and the twins. Sirius was patting her cousin on the back while Remus was speaking pleasantly. George had just brought over some glasses of firewhisky, nodding happily at his brother while they all enjoyed a drink. 'Oh, this is not good,' Harry observed taking in the scene. Before she could say anything, her Aunt Petunia approached.

"Harry dear," she gushed with false affection, "I am afraid we need to be leaving. Your Uncle Vernon has an important business meeting in the morning and needs to get up early."

"But tomorrow is Sunday," Harry protested politely.

"It was the only time I could meet with this new client. He is here from Japan so we are meeting first thing to sign off on some papers before he needs to fly home," Vernon Dursley confirmed.

"What about Dudley?" Harry inquired secretly hoping he was leaving too.

"Sorry cousin, but I kind of had a fight with my girlfriend. She was upset that I didn't bring her with us...but you know...I really couldn't. I kind of hope I can get back in time to make it up to her," Dudley explained taking another gulp of the whiskey.

"I understand and it was nice of all of you to come. Do you have a way home?" Harry was thrilled they were leaving early and wanted to find out what was going on. Her empathy told her the remaining two Marauders and the twins were laughing inside while Sev was feeling rather pleased with himself.

"Your former Headmaster has arranged a Portkey directly to Privet Drive. Might nice of him to do so," Vernon commented, "but it's a hell of a way to travel."

"I don't care for it either uncle," she remarked as they took hold of a muggle newspaper. Dumbledore did a quick countdown and they vanished.

"Come, Harry, the rest of our guests are arriving for the ball," Severus said taking her arm.

"Sev what is going on? I know that look in your eye and you can't tell me Sirius wasn't up to something."

"I shall explain later."

Harry had no time to argue as he gently steered her to another receiving line. She was too busy greeting the guests to comment further. Severus seemed unusually pleased with himself while Sirius and Remus kept chuckling under their breath. Once the guests had all arrived he quickly steered her into the ballroom before she could ask any further questions.

The ballroom was beautifully decorated with the pots of flowers Harry and Tiberius had arranged for the magic bubbles. She had also hidden a vial of the potion in her robes while getting ready for the ceremony. The chandeliers would be lit in another hour when the sun

set. It was a warm evening so the French doors to the gardens were open, the mirrors reflecting the late day sunshine. A few small tables had been placed out on the veranda. There were also tables around the perimeter of the room and the house elves were moving about offering refreshments. A four tiered wedding cake was off to the side. The small orchestra was in the balcony. With a nod from Severus, they began to play the *Sleeping Beauty Waltz*. Amid the applause and cheers of the guests, he skillfully moved her around the floor, opening the ball.

Harry was smiling up at him as he looked down into her eyes. A moment later, there were gasps, as the crowd oohed and ahhed. Glancing away to see what was going on Severus snorted, raising his brow in amusement. The bubble display had started filling the room with hearts, shamrocks, stars, and moons containing the images of the newly wed couples.

"I see my uncle had a few tricks up his sleeve," Severus remarked with a brief smile. "I had forgotten about that particular brew."

"I helped and so did Phaedra." She beamed. "Do you like it?"

"I am most pleased." As he leaned in to give her a brief kiss, he caught Dumbledore out of the corner of his eye. The old man gave a wave of his wand and all of a sudden Harry and Severus were raised a foot off the floor. They were literally dancing on air.

"What the..." Harry gasped.

"Relax, this is just one of Albus little tricks. He likes to do that with this particular waltz. It seems he is a big fan of some Muggle named Disney. He helped him design some sort of theme park." Harry giggled remembering the feature length cartoon she had once seen at Hermione's and was not at all surprised that Dumbledore had helped design the famous theme park. They were gently lowered to the floor as the waltz ended and other couples began to dance as a new one started. Pulling on Severus' sleeve, she led him over to where the Marauders were standing with the twins. The two younger wizards were having a grand time popping the bubbles which drifted by.

"These are absolutely brilliant!" Fred crooned. George popped another floating by.

"An old potion recipe developed by my family," Severus explained. "It was often used for children's parties."

"Listen old man, how about you let us market this?" Fred asked.

"While I may have several years on you both," he glared at the twins, "I am hardly an old man."

"No offense," George grinned, "it's just an expression."

"I am well aware of the connotation George. I was merely joking with you." Severus had no problem telling the two young men apart. "As for marketing the potion I will take it under consideration."

"Okay enough of the bubble potion. You can tell them more later. I want to know what you did to my relatives!"

"Why, Princess, what makes you think we did anything to them?"

"Don't give me that innocent look Remus Lupin. I may not like them but Petunia is still my mum's sister and Dudley is my cousin."

"I noticed you did not mention your uncle," Severus remarked silkily.

"He's not related by blood but I hope you didn't do anything to hurt him."

"We would never hurt them Honey," Sirius smirked wagging his brows. "We merely gave them something more to think about."

"I know your something mores Padfoot. What did you do?"

"I promise I didn't do anything. I was only talking to your cousin. So was Remus for that matter."

"In other words you kept both kept them busy," Harry scowled at her two protectors, "while the twins did something to his drink."

"Now why would we do that?" George pretended to pout.

"Just tell me already! I promise not to get mad. He is not the nicest person after all."

"We slipped him our newest invention," Fred supplied smugly.

"Spiked his drink and he never even knew," George confirmed.

"What did you give him?" Harry sighed.

"It's called *Backwards Babbling Beverages*. It causes everything you say to come out in non stop reverse," Fred announced proudly.

"Of course, we gave Dudley the prototype. We're not quite certain how long it will last but it should have kicked in as soon as they reached Privet Drive." George looked thoughtful.

"I told you we didn't hurt him," Sirius gloated. "I can just see Petunia's face."

"She will be beside herself that her little Diddylings is all mixed up," Harry said trying unsuccessfully to contain her smile.

"Interesting potion," Severus remarked his lips twitching with amusement.

"And what went on with my uncle? I could sense he was up to something."

"It seems he is having some financial problems. He knew you had inherited a large sum of money from the Potter estate and that you married well. He felt as family," Severus glowered with a sneer, "we should help him out."

"Oh, Sev, you didn't give him any money did you?"

"Actually he was more than satisfied with the bag of gold I presented him with. Quite a greedy man your uncle."

"Severus why did you give in to his demands?" Harry asked anxiously.
"He'll only come looking for more now."

"I don't think so Harry. I warned him that if he did it would not be to his benefit. Snapes do not take kindly to blackmail. In fact he is in for quite a shock to say the least." He patted Harry's shoulder.

"What did you do to him Severus?" Remus queried.

"Nothing at all Lupin. I simply handed him the gold and told him to leave."

"Sev! " Harry gasped appalled. "You should never have given him anything. He is a nasty..."

"Relax, Harry, the bag was filled with Leprechaun gold. I dare say he will not be pleased," Severus laughed wickedly. "It will disappear shortly before morning."

They all looked at him for a moment and then Sirius barking laugh joined with Severus' rich baritone. The twins whooped gleefully, Remus grinning from ear to ear. Harry's smile reached her eyes as she hugged Severus.

"Harry as your godfather I am claiming you for the next dance," Sirius told her as they calmed down. "I promise to have you back to Severus in a little while."

"Then I shall go and ask Minerva to dance." Severus nodded heading over to where the elder witch was seated with Albus and her new husband.

"You're not angry for what we did to the Dursleys are you?"

"No, Padfoot, I'm just curious why none of you did anything to Aunt Petunia."

"We figured she would be miserable enough between that whale of a son and bastard of a husband."

"I can just see the sour look on her face when the gold is gone," Harry giggled. "Not to mention how emotional she will get with Dudley."

"Ooo, Diddykins, what did those evil freaks do to you," Sirius wailed in a high-pitched imitation of Petunia.

"That about sums it up." Harry rolled her eyes trying not to laugh again. "Have you planned any more pranks for the evening?"

"Sorry, no. I didn't want to make a spectacle of your special day. But if you want I could probably come up with a few?" He asked eagerly.

"No. I think you have made your point. Of course, there is always tomorrow or the next day."

"I'll work on it. It does my heart good to see the twins following in the Marauders foot steps."

"What about me? I like a good prank now and again."

"Ah...but you are entirely too nice. Just like Lily."

"It's not my fault you and dad were such bullies. I feel sorry for Remus. He had to put up with the two of you."

"Don't let his innocent look fool you. I seem to remember you called him a wolf in sheep's clothing once upon a time."

"He is. He just doesn't let things get too out of hand."

"We were kids, honey, and kids are sometimes cruel without meaning to be."

"I suppose so. Speaking of kids where is Phaedra?"

"Over there," he gestured across the room, "dancing with Remus."

"She really adores the two of you."

"She's a sweet kid, just like her aunt was." Sirius remarked brushing her cheek with a kiss as the music ended. "Come on I'll take you back over to Severus. I see he's gone to talk with Albus."

Harry spent some time speaking with Dumbledore and then she and Severus made the rounds speaking with all of their guests. She was

happy to see all of her friends from school and find out what they had been doing. Neville was still working on his apprenticeship in Herbology and spending time with his parents. His confidence continued to increase since his parents memories were restored following the battle of Hogwarts. Lee Jordon was still working for the Weasley twins. Cho continued to work at her grandfather's restaurant but was studying to become a healer. Susan Bones was working at the Ministry of Magic and was dating an Auror. Kingsley was now head of Magical Law Enforcement. Moody was semi-retired but continued to manage the Auror training program. Severus introduced her to various village officials who all had something to say about her defeat of Voldemort. Harry politely answered but did her best to steer the conversations away from the events in question.

"I'm sorry you had to put up with that," he whispered apologetically.

"It's okay. I'm used to it. I'm just glad they didn't ask about you're having been a spy within the inner circle."

"I think they knew better. There will always be those who still believe I was a Deatheater who got out of being sent to Azkaban."

"Hopefully they will put the war far behind and we can all get on with our lives."

Severus didn't reply and Harry wondered if he believed it would ever happen. He was silent as they walked across the room towards Ron, Hermione, Ginny and Draco. It was getting dark and the candles in the chandeliers were magically lit. At the same time, the fountain in the garden was illuminated, the water changing colors. The potion, which had been hidden in the garden, also started to send out new picture bubbles as everyone was calling them.

"Oh, Harry, this is just so beautiful," Hermione gushed looking about.

"I don't know about these bubbles though," Ron sighed. "They keep landing on my nose." He gently puffed his lips to let out a jet of air sending the bubble on it's way.

"I don't know, Ron, it must just be you. No one else is having a problem," Harry replied feigning innocence. She had spotted Ginny,

Draco, and the twins unobtrusively sending the bubbles at him with their wands. Just then, a large mass of the bubbles attacked and they all burst out laughing.

"What the bloody hell," he gasped catching Fred out of the corner of his eye. "I'll get them for this!" He grinned sheepishly.

"Come on, Ron, let's have a drink. I'm thirsty anyway and I know you don't like to dance," Harry suggested pulling on his hand.

"Mr. Weasley, if you don't mind I will dance with your wife while Harry spends some time with you."

"Of course Professor. She has been itching to dance all night."

Severus led Hermione onto the dance floor while Harry led her friends over to the punch bowl.

"Keep me covered guys. I'm going to liven things up a bit. Just don't drink the punch."

"What are you doing?" Draco asked suspiciously. "What is in that potion bottle?"

"It's the bubbles. If you drink them, they come out of your mouth and have to pop for people to know what you said. Tiberius assured me it won't hurt anybody."

"Nice Prank Harry." Ginny's eyes glinted mischievously.

"I will personally bring some to the twins," Ron gloated.

"No, give them some in their butter beers. They haven't been drinking punch." Harry handed him a vial. "Make sure you give some to Sirius and Remus too."

"Right." Ron took the vials and headed over to get the drinks for the others as Harry, Ginny, and Draco moved off to sit at one of the tables.

"Harry, Mum didn't get a chance to ask you yet but she would really like to bring Phaedra home with us tonight so you and Severus could have some time alone."

"I don't know Gin," Harry answered hesitantly.

"Come on, Harry, it's your wedding night. I'm sure my godfather would approve." Draco winked suggestively.

"Draco it's not as if we'll be alone in the house anyway." Harry could feel her cheeks turning hot.

"Yeah, but who wants to be woken up early after a night of sha..."

"Draco!" Ginny interrupted. "Harry knows what you were inferring."

"Just being practical. I'll head over and ask Severus," he swaggered away.

Gales of laughter suddenly erupted from the far end of the room. Dumbledore had just finished a glass of the spiked punch. Harry could see the surprise on his face. He looked around the room resting his eyes briefly on the Weasley twins and the Marauders who had also just finished the drinks Ron had delivered. Ron was doubled over with laughter as he pointed towards Harry. She looked up to see Dumbledore striding towards her, blue eyes twinkling with amusement.

"Having fun Albus?"

"Yes my dear. This is a most ingenious prank," he mouthed, popping the bubbles so he could be heard. "I seem to remember Tiberius doing it to his fellow classmates many years ago."

"He was a prankster?"

"Of course. He was one of the most inventive students of his year," Dumbledore laughed as Fawkes popped onto his shoulder and popped the bubbles with his beak. The phoenix chirped happily and Harry could sense that he was not in the least upset.

"I think Fawkes thinks it is very funny," Ginny chuckled reaching up to stroke his feathers.

"How about it Fawkes, did I get one over on the Headmaster?" Harry inquired of the beautiful bird. He responded with a short happy song and Dumbledore laughed.

"How much of the potion did you put in the punch Harry?"

"Not much. The effects should wear off in a few minutes once you stop drinking Albus."

"Then I think I shall have another glass while I have a chat with Minerva. It seems her husband is having a grand time trying to make her talk."

The group looked over at their former head of house to find her trying desperately not to answer. Her face was screwed up unsuccessfully fighting the laughter, which kept erupting from the bubbles being emitted out of her mouth.

"Have fun Sir," Ginny waved him off.

"Here come Draco and Severus," Harry remarked. The two were moving deftly through the dancers.

"Harry there is no need for Phaedra to go to Molly and Arthur's. I have explained the situation to Draco and he fully agrees." The two exchanged glances.

"Something's up with you two. I can sense it."

"You will find out in due time," Severus tweaked her nose. "In the meantime let's go and cut the cake. I see the elves are changing the punch bowl." He arched his brow looking down at her in amusement.

Once the cake was served, Harry threw her bouquet. It was caught by Susan Bones, Ginny having skillfully avoided it. She was in no hurry to get married. Oddly enough, Kingsley caught the garter. This made for quite a few jokes and laughter.

The rest of the evening was spent dancing and socializing until well past midnight. Harry noticed that Tiberius had disappeared with Phaedra who had fallen asleep on his shoulder. Severus had been chatting with Remus and Sirius for a few minutes before moving off to speak with the orchestra. A moment later, the Orchestra leader made an announcement.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, before we have the last dance of the evening our bridegroom has requested a special dance with his bride." Severus motioned for Harry to come forward and took her into his arms. Harry grinned up at him when she heard the opening strains of the tango they had danced to at the Yule ball. He glided her through the dance while everyone watched mesmerized. His dark eyes were glued to Harry's brilliant emerald green. Harry's heart was racing as she lost herself in their deep black depths. There was no need for *Legilimency*, each was aware of the other's passion. As the music ended Severus deftly pulled Harry's mouth into a passionate kiss. A moment later, she felt the room fade as he apparaeted them both away from the ball and they vanished from the dance floor...

Chapter 8

A Night of Passion Love and Darkness

A/N: This chapter is rated M for a reason. It does contain some slash and also what I hope to convey as a romantic and realistic wedding night for Harry and Severus. It is an alternate version to accommodate the rating. The MA version can be found on the yahoo group for the adult readers. Please review and tell me what you all think as I tried to be as accurate as possible without being offensive.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” Sirius raised his arms addressing the startled guests. “Our groom has asked me to extend his thanks for your attendance on behalf of himself and his new bride one last time. He wanted to surprise her with a few days alone for a brief honeymoon. Please continue to enjoy the rest of the ball.”

This announcement was met with cheers, applause and a few snickers. The orchestra began to play following the announcement that Severus had arranged for them to stay another hour. Much to the delight of the late night revelers the house elves had set up a table laden with pastries and demitasse.

“I see my nephew has already departed.” Tiberius smiled knowingly at Sirius and Remus. He had just returned from putting Phaedra to bed. She had woken briefly and he had spent the time settling her back to sleep with a bedtime story.

“Do you think Harry will be upset with him? She was pretty adamant about not leaving Phaedra,” Remus remarked.

“I think Severus will convince her that Phaedra will be fine with all of us for a few days,” Tiberius answered. “They should have some time together. It’s not as if they have left the country.”

“Let’s just hope Harry doesn’t hex Sev into oblivion on their wedding night for going against her wishes.” Sirius lips twisted into a wicked grin. He could just imagine what Harry might do to Severus...

Harry looked around in shock as they appeared at their destination. It took her a moment to realize that she was in the entrance hall of

Severus' London town home. Her new husband was looking down at her. His dark eyes were shining with amusement.

"Sev, what are we doing here?"

"I have arranged for us to be alone for a few days."

"But I thought..."

"Harry," he cut her off, "I know you did not wish a honeymoon because you are still concerned with Phaedra. However, I felt we should both have some privacy for a few days at least. If there are any problems we can simply Apparate back to the castle."

"Does anyone else know about this?"

"Your other protectors and my uncle helped to get the house ready." He arched his brow, the corners of his lips twitching into a sly smile.

"Right," she responded. A myriad of emotions passed over her face in an instant. She was not sure if she was angry, happy, or just plain amazed that she had no clue what they had been doing. Severus simply threw back his head laughing in his rich baritone. "You know I should hex you from here to eternity for this but that laugh has made it all worth while. You should do it more often," she told him breaking into a slow smile.

"I have a suspicion with you in my life I just may do so." He gently traced the outline of her face with one slender finger. "Come..." He scooped her up into his arms carrying her up the stairs. "I believe the house elves have laid out a late supper in our room."

"Severus, put me down!" she exclaimed, taken by surprise with his unexpected action.

He simply ignored her request and continued up the stairs towards the master bedroom. The door opened with a brief wave of his hand, snapping shut behind them, before he gently set her down on her feet. Harry had only been in this room very briefly during her last summer with the Dursleys. She looked around, noting the décor had been changed.

"Do you like it?" Severus queried, watching her.

"You changed it."

"I felt it would be more fitting now that there would also be a female occupant."

"It's lovely. Not too feminine or masculine," she said, investigating her surroundings.

The walls were painted pale celery green. This was complimented with forest green and gold brocade draperies. The plush carpet was done in dark green with a light green border matching the walls. In front of the fireplace there was a green loveseat with two green and gold striped chairs. A light oak coffee table had been placed between them. An oak secretary stood in one corner. The enormous oak four-poster bed stood at the other end of the room. The bed hangings were the same pattern as the drapes. The linens were light green with a matching gold comforter. A small table with two chairs had been set up with sandwiches and a pot of tea. Four doors led off the room. Harry discovered that two were closets with many of their clothes already inside. The third was a small dressing room with a day bed and a private bath for Severus. The last door led to a huge bathroom with a sunken tub. There was a set of double sinks and a large mirrored vanity table for Harry's use. She noted that the long white silk nightgown she had selected for her wedding night was hanging on a hook behind the door. A small vial of dark green fluid was sitting on the sink. She flushed slightly knowing that it was a pregnancy preventative potion often dispensed by Madam Pomfrey to the older students at Hogwarts. 'Seems the elves didn't forget a thing,' she mused, coming back into the main room. A slight smile was playing about her lips.

"I'm pleased that our quarters meet with your approval," Severus remarked.

"You're sure Phaedra will be okay?" she questioned anxiously, as he pulled out her chair at the table before seating himself opposite her.

"Harry," he contemplated for a moment. "Don't you trust your godfather and the werewolf with her? Not to mention my uncle will also be present." He sneered.

"Since you put it that way...I just hope the castle is still standing when we get back. There is no telling what the Marauders will do." Harry teased him with a devious little grin. She poured the tea and they helped themselves to the sandwiches.

"Hmm...perhaps I should Floo my uncle in the morning and warn him to be a bit more cautious," he answered playfully.

"Oh, I don't know. I have a suspicion he may just be as much of a prankster as they are. We may get back and find bubbles coming from all the chimneys!"

"It would not surprise me in the least," Severus replied. He was happy that she was no longer disturbed with the idea of leaving the child for a few days.

"How long will we be here in London?"

"Only three days. I have made dinner reservations for tomorrow and then we shall attend the theatre on Monday evening."

"What will we be seeing?"

"I hope you have no objections to *The Phantom of the Opera*?"

"No. I think it should be fun. I saw an old Muggle movie version once when my aunt and uncle were out for the day. I was able to sneak and watch the television," she explained, seeing his inquiring look.
"Will we need Muggle clothes?"

"Yes, it is a Muggle theatre. Would you like to go and buy something new tomorrow afternoon? I need some new Muggle attire to wear myself so we could spend the afternoon shopping."

"All right, even though I know you don't like shopping unless it is for potions ingredients."

Severus just quirked his brow, taking a sip of his tea. Harry grinned back with delight sensing his amusement...

"Well, Padfoot, it was one hell of a party," Remus said, climbing the stairs with his friend.

"I think so too. It was good to see my grandmother looking so well. I felt bad for Andy though," he remarked, referring to his cousin Andromeda. "I could tell she misses Nymphadora."

"We all do, Padfoot. I think Harry forgot for a minute that she had been killed. I saw her looking around for her and Charlie at one point during the evening before she realized."

"She didn't say anything to anyone did she?" Sirius asked nervously.

"No. She just looked sad. She and Tonks were kind of close."

"I know. It was Tonks that made her want to become an Auror. She used to love watching her Morph into someone else."

"We all did, Padfoot. She was always happy no matter what was going on with Voldemort."

Sirius nodded, pushing open the door to their room. He put up a silencing charm to prevent Phaedra from overhearing anything she shouldn't be privy to. Her bedroom door had been left open in case she needed anyone during the night. Her nightmares were growing less frequent but still persisted. Tiberius was concerned that with all the excitement of the day she would not sleep well during her first night without Harry. He had taken the added precaution of keeping his door open also. A magnification charm had been placed on her voice so that if she was having dreams they would hear them immediately.

"I hope Phaedra will be okay tonight. She's not used to being without Harry," Sirius remarked, pulling off his robes.

"If not I know a big black doggie that will be happy to stand guard at the foot of her bed," Remus teased him, tossing his own robes onto the chair.

"I would much prefer to be on the foot of Harry's bed tonight!" He snorted. "I have no clue what she sees in him. She could have had us instead, Moony."

"Now, Padfoot, you know she would never want to separate us and would feel like a third wheel if she had taken us both. It's just like she said. You can't help who you fall in love with," Remus admonished, putting his arms around Sirius neck.

"Yeah, but Snivellus of all people."

"He's changed, Sirius, and you know it. You even hugged each other earlier following the ceremony. What's even more astounding is that you both meant it. Harry loves him and he loves her. If I didn't know better I would say you were jealous."

"I am not! I want her to be happy. I'm just not sure he's the man to do it."

"He already has, Padfoot, and you can just drop that scowl from your face right now. Harry still loves us both and always will."

"You're right as usual, Moony. What do you suppose they are doing right now?"

"I don't know about them but I know what I would like to be doing."

"Oh really. What's that?" Sirius' eyes gleamed in the dim light from the candles.

"Like you really don't know?"

"Show me." Sirius teased his mate.

"All right, I will." Moony planted his lips on Sirius', who returned his embrace. Their tongues slid easily into one another's mouths exploring the cavity beyond. Each time they kissed it was as if it were for the first time all over again...

Tiberius had heard the two young wizards retire to their room for the night. He knew they really loved one another but he still had some

reservations regarding Black. He seemed accepting and even happy over the past few days but Tiberius also knew how much he cared about his goddaughter. Overall, Sirius was a good man, but his family like Tiberius' had its dark side. He hoped that the new relationship he and Severus were developing would continue to improve. The two young wizards had more in common than even they realized. He suspected it would still be a rocky road ahead for the two of them but with Harry, Phaedra and the werewolf's help he believed that under the circumstances they would grow to become good friends.

He also knew his nephew was still a bit skittish when it came to the werewolf. However, Remus had shown remarkable restraint and resilience where his condition was concerned. Remus had been bitten as a child. Every day had been a test of his courage and strength. Remus was a kind and caring individual. More so than many men Tiberius had met who were not afflicted with such a terrible curse. Tiberius held no ill will towards him despite the fact that he had almost attacked Severus while they were in school. No, that had been due to Black's dark sense of humor. Had Black followed the rest of his family into Slytherin, Tiberius had no doubt that the event never would have happened. Still, Sirius Black was a loyal man to those he cared about. He had a good heart and resisted the darkness that had possessed the majority of the Blacks. He was also a survivor. Twelve years in Azkaban would have destroyed most people. Tiberius understood that Sirius Black's childhood was not much better than Severus' had been. What Black did not know was that his late Uncle Alphard and Tiberius had been good friends. Both were outcasts as far as their relatives had been concerned and Tiberius could sympathize with Black's situation. Yes, Severus and Black had more in common than they had ever guessed. Alphard and Tiberius had done what ever they could to save their favorite nephews from the clutches of the darkness which had been eating at their world. Remus had fared somewhat better but not by much. At least his family didn't disown or put him down like a rabid animal.

He also knew the neglect and mistreatment that Harry had endured as a child. Yet, unlike the Dark Lord, she had persevered never giving in to darkness. She always saw the good in others and her capacity to love was unbelievable. He firmly believed that Harry was the

anchor which would keep them all together by cementing the relationships to which they were now all bound.

Moving swiftly and silently down the hall, he checked one last time on Phaedra, before retiring for the night. She was sleeping peacefully. The sleeping draught he had slipped her earlier had taken effect. He smiled down at the child affectionately. ‘I hope you aren’t too unhappy that Harry and Sev won’t be here in the morning. I’m sure you will have fun with the three of us,’ he thought, contemplating the sleeping child. Sirius was planning to take her flying on one of the winged horses tomorrow. Tiberius smirked picturing the look of excitement on Phaedra’s face in the morning when she found out. They had other things planned as well for the next three days. Tiberius would work with her on a simple potion and Remus was taking her over to see Molly Weasley where she would be baking cookies.

“Sleep well, Little One,” he whispered, turning from the bed. He was about to leave the room when he caught an odd reflection out of the corner of his eye in the direction of the mirror. Turning swiftly, he studied it warily, running his wand over it once again. He knew Harry did not like the thing and her empathy was extraordinary. Still, he could detect no unusual spells. “It must have been a trick of the light,” he muttered. “I’m probably more tired than I thought.” Shrugging his shoulders, he left the room to prepare for bed. Tomorrow would be a busy day. He never heard the soft voice or the leering smile from within.

“Ah...Blood traitor. Enjoy yourself for now. Soon your family will topple like a stack of cards. The House of Snape is about to come crumbling down. Your niece is almost mine already. It is just a matter of time...”

Harry finished her tea and stretched. She was growing tired and the events of the day had worn her out but she knew Severus had other things in mind. ‘Come to think of it, so do I,’ she mused. Harry didn’t realize she was smiling at the thought.

“What do you find so amusing?” Severus inquired.

“Huh? Oh I was just thinking.”

“I can see that. I am curious as to what is making you smile like that.”

"Nothing," Harry replied hurriedly, feeling the heat rise in her face. "I think I'll go take a shower and change." Severus snorted trying to conceal his laughter as she fled into the bathroom. 'He knows darn well I was thinking about our making love,' she thought, rolling her eyes. Stripping off her clothes, she pulled the pins from her hair, deciding to take a warm bath rather than a shower. Pouring the bath salts she found into the tub, she immersed herself fully, relaxing as the tension flowed from her limbs. Harry could hear the water go on in Severus' shower...

Severus casually removed his wedding robes folding them neatly on the day bed before stepping into the shower. He was quietly humming the waltz he and Harry had danced to earlier in the evening. A smile tugged at his lips as he contemplated the night in front of him. 'I wonder what the students would think if they could see their dour Professor now,' he considered amused. 'I'm sure my Slytherins are delighted. Indeed, they would think it a coup that a Slytherin and former Death Eater ended up married to one of the most powerful leaders of the light. I shall have to make sure they never realize that it was Harry who actually scored such a coup.' He chuckled to himself. 'Merlin, I never believed I could feel this way about anyone or anything again. Hell, I never even expected to survive the war! Let alone end up with the one person who made it all happen. Sometimes I wonder if I'm good enough for her...'

"Moony," Sirius moaned softly. "You're doing it again."

"Doing what, Padfoot?" the werewolf whispered in his ear.

"Tying my stomach up in knots with anticipation," Sirius answered, pulling on Remus' trousers.

"That was my intention all along," Remus' husky voice responded, as he fumbled with Sirius' shirt. "Oh hell!" he gasped, as Sirius' hand found his growing erection through his trousers.

"Now you're really in for it," Remus growled, ripping Sirius' shirt open, buttons flying in all directions."

"What is that supposed to mean?"

"Just this," Remus panted, running his tongue down the side of Sirius' neck to his chest.

"Then I will just have to fight fire with fire." Sirius grinned. Opening Remus' zipper and dropping his mate's trousers to the floor he tugged on his boxers. Remus began to kiss him harder, all the while forcing Sirius towards the bed...

Harry stepped from the bath and hurriedly dried herself off with the large fluffy towel the elves had laid out. She left her damp hair down around her shoulders. Butterflies fluttered in her stomach. She could feel her desire for Severus building in anticipation of their finally being together. Grabbing a bottle of perfume from the vanity she put some on. It had the subtle smell of vanilla. Pulling on her nightgown, she worried once again about the scars on her body, before hanging up her wedding dress. The elves would see that it was properly cleaned. Studying her reflection in the bathroom mirror, she was pleased. The sheer silk made the outline of her breasts stand out and accented the curve of her hips. Taking a deep breath, she reached for the potion bottle, swallowing the contents with a swift gulp. Her heart was beating hard and she stood for a minute to steady her nerves. 'Damn, I am a nervous wreck. Calm down, Harry,' she chided herself. 'You stood up to the most evil wizard in over one hundred years. Yet the thought of making love for the first time has your knees weak.' Taking another deep breath, she let it out slowly, opening the door...

"Oomph..." Sirius grunted, flopping backwards onto the bed. Remus slid off his boxers and stood naked over the Animagus.

"Now my love, you will find out the true meaning of torture." The werewolf smiled. His golden eyes were glowing like burning coals by the lone candle. Reaching down he pulled Sirius' trousers and shorts off with one swift movement.

"What...do you...have...in mind?" Sirius panted, meeting Remus' gaze with his own.

"You will be howling with delight and begging for mercy by the time I get finished with you," Remus' husky voice responded. Pinning Sirius to the bed with his thighs he reached down grasping his mate

between his thighs. Slowly he began to work his hand back and forth, relishing the feel of the soft pulsing before dropping to his knees...

The bedroom was illuminated with a soft glow from the fireplace. Severus was standing by the long French windows looking out over the gardens. He was dressed only in black pajama bottoms. He turned his head when the bathroom door opened. Harry's lithe form was silhouetted in the dim light. Letting out a slow breath, Severus' dark eyes drank in the outline of her body. Her breasts were round and taught beneath the soft fabric of her nightgown, slender thighs curving gently down from well-formed buttocks. Harry was unaware that the angle of the firelight enabled him to see through the material allowing him to see the contours of her body beneath. Severus silently blessed whatever deity had granted him the privilege of loving this exquisite young woman. He was tantalized by the thought of consummating their union.

"If you get any more beautiful Aphrodite will be jealous," he remarked quietly, as she moved over to stand beside him. Cupping her chin, onyx eyes met emerald. He gently lowered his lips to hers.

"Somehow I don't think the goddess of love and beauty has anything to worry about." She blushed, resting her head on his bare chest. He circled her with his arms stroking her thick locks.

"Harry..." he whispered.

"Hmm...?" She looked up shyly.

"I love you." He met her lips once again, more insistently. Gently pressing his tongue to her teeth she opened her mouth meeting his kiss. He slowly rubbed her back. She leaned into him, bodies pressed together. 'Go slow Severus. Don't frighten her,' he thought. Cupping her buttocks he ran his hands down the side of her thighs.

"I love you too," Harry responded, their lips slowly separating.

"As husband and wife we should have no secrets from one another," Severus said quietly, toying with the fine spaghetti strap of her nightgown.

"No...I don't suppose...we should," Harry answered nervously.

"To love also means we should trust one another without question." His dark eyes bored into her, reflecting his smoldering passion. "Do you trust me?"

"Yes...you know...I do."

"Then the best way to express our trust is to bare both our bodies and souls to each other. That way there will be nothing hidden between us." He gently pushed the strap off her shoulder, never taking his eyes from hers.

Harry's heart was pounding so hard in her chest she wondered if Sev could hear it. Staring up into the black pools, she lost herself for a moment. She understood what he was asking. She could feel his love and desire through her empathy. Slowly, she nodded in acquiescence. He removed her other arms from the straps. The silk nightgown slid to the floor around her ankles. With another swift movement, he pulled the drawstring on his pajama bottoms, letting them fall. They stood naked together in the fading firelight, Severus gently tracing the outline of her body.

"Sev..." she whispered, acutely aware of his manhood.

"Sh..." he soothed, pressing a slender finger to her lips in understanding. "I will never hurt you, Harry," he murmured tenderly. "My pleasure will be in yours." Lifting her chin, he gently sought her mouth, enveloping her with his passion.

Harry's body responded. A feeling of warmth crept down her abdomen as his hands moved down her back. His mouth became more insistent. Releasing her tongue he planted warm kisses on her neck. Pulling back momentarily, his black eyes sparkling with love and desire, he scooped her up into his arms. Carrying Harry over to the bed, he set her down in the middle, smoothly sliding in beside her...

Remus chuckled evilly. Sirius gasped with pleasure as he lay back on the bed, Remus kneeling in front of him.

"Moony," he moaned. "You weren't kidding about slow torture."

"Never underestimate a horny werewolf," he answered mischievously. "I have only just begun to play."

"Ooohhh..." The Animagus took in a sharp breath. Remus had lowered his mouth and was running his tongue up and down. "Moony...please..." he begged. "I...surrender." Sirius squirmed, reaching down to pull his mate closer.

Remus growled softly with pleasure at his lover's submission. Giving him a gentle nip on the thigh, he teased him once again with his tongue, slowly letting his lips move back down his stomach...

Severus brushed the hair from Harry's face settling himself on his side. Her emerald eyes were wide with anticipation. He nibbled on her soft earlobe then ran his tongue down her neck. He began to fondle her soft breasts, smirking as she sucked in a tight breath. Lowering his head their lips met once again, her tongue pushing into his mouth first. He continued to tease one breast and then the other.

Harry was growing more excited and slowly began to relax as Severus toyed with her breasts. 'Damn, I wish I had read Hermione's copy of that sex manual I gave her when she got engaged! I have no clue what to do,' she thought frantically. 'What did Mrs. Weasley say? I should just use my instincts. How am I supposed to do that!' Her panicking thoughts were interrupted when Severus shifted position and once again ran his tongue down her neck. This time he didn't stop there.

Severus was watching his bride closely. He realized she was relaxing under his hands but was also distressed. 'I know she must be worried that she will not be any good. If I have to, I will help her. Although, it is delightful that she is so shy,' he mused. 'I think it's time for a bit more teasing. Her body will do the rest.' Softly breaking their kiss, he slid his tongue down along her neck, bracing himself for her reaction; he let it slide over her right breast. She stiffened slightly. Looking up he quirked his left brow with an unasked question. Harry nodded uncertainly in agreement. Lowering his head back down he gently kissed her right breast while fondling her left. Harry closed her eyes and leaned back into the pillow...

Sirius ran his hands through Remus' hair. Growling with pleasure, he bucked lightly beneath the continued onslaught of the werewolf's sweet torment. Moony had both hands planted firmly on his thighs, deftly nipping and teasing. He wasn't sure if he were in Heaven or Hell as the fire in his limbs grew with each passing minute when his mate lifted his head and stood over him once again.

"It seems to me you're the one having all the fun," Remus remarked, cocking his head.

"Then why don't you join me in the bed? I can guarantee you will not regret it," Sirius replied, giving him a saucy grin. "We'll see who really howls with delight," Sirius said, pulling Remus down beside him in a passionate embrace. Their tongues were flicking behind one another's teeth. He proceeded to stroke the werewolf's body with his own in a gyrating frenzy of twisted limbs.

"Padfoot... I... need you..." Remus groaned. "I...can't wait...any...longer!"

"*Oleaceus*," Sirius muttered the lubricating spell into Remus' ear, pulling him onto his knees. "Now who is enjoying a bit of torture?" He laughed wickedly, straddling him from behind.

"I think we will both be grateful for that silencing spell tonight, Padfoot," Remus croaked.

"I do believe you're right, Moony," Sirius whispered. Remus leaned back to meet him. Two minutes later two simultaneous howls reverberated from the walls. Both wizards were grateful for the silencing charm as they met their release. They tumbled back to the bottom of the bed panting, their bodies' slick with sweat.

A misty figure watched furtively as the sleeping child shifted in her sleep. The wait would be over soon. Revenge would be more than sweet. The child was the perfect choice. No one would suspect until it was too late. A new body and a new life to be had with no one the wiser. The little one was gullible and easily used.

"Soon she will take her place in the mirror and I will be free." A twisted smile graced the face within the mirror with the thought of the

havoc that would be rendered. "Yes, Little One, dream. Dream of the mama you have lost. Your deepest desire will be the downfall of them all. I will enjoy seeing the looks on their faces when they realize the soul of Phaedra Snape no longer inhabits her body but has been replaced with mine. Ha, ha, ha." The cackling laughter drifted throughout the Limbo behind the mirror; the other dark inhabitants knew better than to come near the one who watched...

Harry rested her head back into the pillows as Severus' mouth closed over her breast. Instinctively her hand moved to his head playing in his fine silky hair. Her tension melted as a wave of heat moved through her. She moaned softly, sensations of hot and cold tingling within her, sending shockwaves of desire down her abdomen.

Severus was more than a little pleased with the response he was eliciting from Harry. He also found her youthful breasts delightful. He could feel his erection but was more than able to control himself. His release would come soon enough. Harry's newfound desire was more important. He wanted to initiate her properly. He tenderly kissed her breast one last time, raising his head to find her lips once again.

Harry met Severus' eyes before their lips met. The passion and tenderness they showed moved her deeply. In that moment she understood how much he truly cared. There was no need for words. Their mouths met, tongues twisting and rubbing against the roofs of one another's mouths. Wrapping her arms around him, she ran her hands over the soft skin of his back. She could feel his hardened member resting against her thigh.

Severus could feel Harry rubbing his back as he deepened his kiss. 'That's right, Harry, just relax and let your desire take over,' he thought. 'I shall awake senses you didn't know existed. Bewitching your mind and creeping through your veins to touch your nerves like fire and ice. With our first union you will understand how deeply I care for you. Tonight is your night. I mean to make it special.' Severus slowly broke from the kiss. Once again he fondled her breast before letting his slender fingers trail over her abdomen...

Sirius and Remus lay nestled in each other's arms, heads resting on their pillows, content with the quiet intimacy that had ensued following their frenzied lovemaking.

"Padfoot...Are you asleep?"

"Hmm? Just dozing, Moony. Is something wrong?"

"No, not at all. I couldn't be happier right now. I was just thinking about how things have turned out for all of us."

"I know, Moony. I'm sorry I have been such a prat lately about Harry and Severus."

"That's okay, Padfoot. I would have been worried if you hadn't been."

"I can't help caring about her."

"I care about her too, you know. If Severus can make her happy than that's all that should matter."

"You're right. I guess I'll just have to get used to the idea some more. He really isn't that bad once you get past that mask he always wears. Just don't let him know I said that," Sirius warned, chuckling. "I may still have a few pranks up my sleeve."

"I won't say a word," Remus snickered. "But if I were you I would keep a safe distance from Harry when you do. She may just turn it back onto you."

"Hey, who said I won't prank my adorable goddaughter too?" He grinned wagging his brows.

"Oh no. Why do I think we are in for a round of prank wars?" Remus groaned.

"Ah...now that is something to dream about...eh, Moony?"

"Go to sleep, Padfoot."

"I was doing just that when you decided to have a late night chat. Now I'm wide-awake. Are you up for another round?"

Remus just gave him a boyish smile allowing his hands to creep down Sirius' abdomen...

"Sev, that tickles!" Harry giggled as his finger trailed down her stomach.

"Does it?" He quirked his brow amused.

"Uh huh..." she muttered, closing her eyes as he ran little circles through her hair.

"Don't you like it?"

"I didn't say that." She smiled, opening her eyes to look at him.

"Good," he answered, seeking her lips. Once again, he deepened the kiss, continuing to fondle her for a few minutes. 'That's the girl, you're getting there,' he mused, as she ran her hand down his back and over his buttocks and thigh. 'I won't push. You'll reach around when you're ready. In the meantime I believe a little enticement is in order.' He smiled inwardly. Trailing his fingers in the fashion she was now becoming comfortable with he let his hand slide down the side of her groin, slowly separating the soft outer folds of her womanhood.

Harry stiffened for a moment but did not break away from him. Instead, she tightened her arms around his shoulders seeking his reassurance. He continued to cradle her in his other arm, kissing her slowly. She relaxed once again, parting her thigh to allow him access.

Severus lazily moved his fingers teasing her soft flesh. Harry's eyes were closed as he eased out of the kiss to nibble on her ear while he explored. He had found his mark and began to massage it. Moving his finger in a tight circle he waited patiently for the response he knew would be forthcoming.

Harry sucked in a sharp breath, a delightful tingle spreading though her lower body. Instinctively she stretched into it, separating her thighs, allowing Severus greater access. Opening her eyes, she sought his mouth, as her breathing deepened.

Severus released her ear lobe with a gentle nip. Meeting her mouth he matched her insistent kisses with his own. He continued to tease her; delighted that she was showing such signs of pleasure at his intimate contact. She moved her hands over his back and thighs, letting her fingers run back up his stomach to his chest and down again. ‘You’re getting warmer, love, but perhaps I need to give you a little bit of a push,’ he considered wryly. ‘Although, your modesty is refreshing.’ With this thought in mind, he calmly moved his outer leg and wrapped it over Harry’s. His erection was firmly pressed up against her.

Harry felt Severus shift his weight slightly, pinning her leg beneath him. Rubbing up against her thigh, he continued to send waves of heat through her. Gathering her courage she knew what he wanted her to do. Swallowing nervously she ran her hand back over his thigh and onto his lower abdomen. Her fingers lingered there for a moment. Shyly, she reached down to explore. Severus took a deep breath as her small hand started to stroke him tenderly. She was grateful that the fire was down to embers now since she could feel the flush creeping up her cheeks...

Remus had Sirius pinned beneath him having reversed their previous roles with this second round of intimacy.

“Oh, Moony, what ever you do don’t stop!” Sirius begged.

“What would you do if I did?” the werewolf asked, thrusting into him once again.

“You don’t want to find out!” Sirius grunted as Remus reached around to fondle him. Sirius gasped with pleasure as Remus teased his senses.

“Never fear, my love, I have no intention of stopping. I find your body absolutely delicious,” Remus told him, drinking in his scent. His heightened senses told him of his mate’s desire as he pressed back into him.

“Remus, I know I don’t tell you often enough but I love you very much. I promise never to doubt you ever again,” Sirius sobbed, waves of pleasure coursing through him.

"Me too, Padfoot...me too..."

Severus tilted his head back with pleasure, watching Harry beneath hooded eyes, as she explored his lower body. Her touch was light. She shyly continued to move her hand with a steady rhythm. He sensed her discomfiture and gave her a squeeze of encouragement. 'Now, I hope this won't make her uncomfortable, but I don't want her first time to be too painful. I look forward to the time when she will enjoy my next exploration,' he pondered, considering his next move. He cautiously moved his hand downward, gently performing a perfunctory test.

Harry jumped, drawing back sharply, a stab of pain running through her. She looked at Severus wide-eyed and anxious.

"Sev," she breathed. "That hurt!"

"Shh...I'm sorry, Harry, it's all right," he whispered huskily, kissing the tip of her nose. "Lay back now," he said, keeping his fingers still so as not to alarm her further. 'Damn, this is not going to be as easy as I hoped. No matter, there are other ways to get her to relax enough when the time comes. I just didn't want to push her tonight not knowing how she will react.' Leaning over he nibbled on her ear once more then sought her lips for a deep kiss. She was still a little tense so he patiently waited until her breathing evened out once more. Then he continued exploring her intimately.

Harry curled into Severus as his tongue ran over the ridges on the roof of her mouth. She knew what he was doing and let him lead her now. 'I hope it doesn't hurt too much,' she worried silently. Severus had somehow shifted his hand so that he was able to stimulate her without any discomfort. She slowly settled down as a new wave of tingling sent pleasant shock waves up inside her body.

Severus was watching Harry closely. Easing his tongue from her mouth, he lowered his head to tease her breast once more, moving his hand from between her legs to fondle her. Harry once again began to breathe deeply, the heat of desire reinforced within her...

"Moony..." Sirius sighed contentedly. "Let's never get out of bed again."

"As nice as that sounds, Padfoot, I don't believe it will be possible." He nuzzled his lover's neck.

"I know...but it's a nice thought." He yawned. "Let's get some sleep. I'm taking Phaedra flying tomorrow."

"I hope you know what you're doing. Harry will kill you if anything happens and Severus will chop you up for potions ingredients."

"Not to worry, Moony, I have everything under control."

"That's what worries me, Padfoot...Padfoot?" Remus turned to look at Sirius when he didn't comment and smiled fondly. Sirius was sound asleep.

Harry was enjoying the feel of Severus' explorations once again. Her hand was drifting through his long locks. Every now and then, she would pull him to her. He would tease her wickedly when she did this, sending waves of excitement through her. She looked down when he shifted his position beside her.

'Okay, time to drive my little one insane with delight. I hope she isn't put off but I know she understands about the various ways to stimulate the sex drive. Although, I won't push her do the same to me tonight. She's not ready but it will come in time,' he reflected, smiling inwardly. 'In the meantime...'

Harry sank back with a low moan. Severus was running his tongue down from her cleavage onto her abdomen, slowly tracing the outline of her navel. 'Now this is really nice,' she thought as another wave of butterflies ran through her. She was totally unperturbed by his actions and found them more than a little erotic. Reaching down, she ran her hand through his hair. He playfully nipped her inner thigh. She was aware that he was subtly shifting downward but was becoming too aroused to care.

Severus gradually worked his way down to her thighs, teasing her with his lips as he went. He knew that soon he would have to take his bride and consummate their union but he wanted her to welcome his embrace. He would be as careful as possible to avoid causing her undue pain. However, he knew she would have some discomfort. He

could lessen this if she was fully relaxed and willing. His next actions would help this along. Severus had never known a woman who did not writhe with pleasure at this form of intimacy.

Harry looked down as Severus kissed her thigh one last time and lightly pushed her legs apart to slip between them. She was puzzled for a minute as he was down so low. ‘What in Merlin’s name...’ Her thought was interrupted as a sudden shock wave burst through her body. His tongue found its mark.

Harry’s breathing deepened considerably. Instinctively moving to allow him more room, she reached down tangling her hands in his hair. Her body was on fire. She thought she would go crazy with the agony of it all. There was a sweet throbbing like waves of electricity running up and down her body.

Subtly, Severus observed Harry’s reactions. He knew he had done the right thing. He would have to take her in a few minutes. His own need was becoming overpowering. He would do his best to keep her stimulated while she was uncomfortable, keeping her pain as brief as possible. ‘I want her to remember the pleasure of her first time not the discomfort,’ he thought.

“Severus, I love you so much,” Harry moaned, arching her back as another wave of excitement coursed through her.

“I love you too,” he answered softly.

“You...you’re...driving me...insane.”

“That, my dear, is the idea.” He smirked. “Did I not tell you that my pleasure would come from yours?”

Harry was reminded of a snake the way he moved his tongue. ‘Figures he would be in Slytherin. Now I know the real meaning of a snake in the grass.’ She moaned quietly to herself. ‘Oh, Merlin, I can’t take much more of this.’

Severus raised his head as Harry’s breath came in short gasps, her body trembling with desire. With delicate and slow movements, he moved up to kiss her soft stomach, then her breasts, first one then

the other. His loins were aching with the desire to possess her. It was time...

Tiberius leaped from the bed. Phaedra was crying. Grabbing his robe, he ran down the hall, almost colliding with Remus and Sirius. They all rushed into her room together. Phaedra was sitting up in bed, crying hysterically.

"Phaedra, it's all right." Tiberius wrapped his arms around the child's shoulders.

"Uncle...I...had a...dream about...mummy," she sobbed, burying her face in his chest. "She was...all...alone...and trying...to find...me."

"Sh...Phaedra," Remus' soft voice consoled. "It was just a bad dream."

"Uncle Moony is right," Sirius confirmed. "We all have bad dreams once in a while. I think maybe you had too much cake at the party tonight," he said, trying to lighten her mood.

"I only had two pieces!" She pouted turning her head to look at the Animagus.

"That is one too many," Tiberius agreed, going along with Sirius' attempt to distract her from the nightmare.

"Aunt Harry said I could have them."

"Hmm...I'll just have to have a word with that goddaughter of mine then."

"Uncle Sirius, please don't yell at her."

"Don't worry he won't." Remus eased her anxiety. "If I know him, he will just play a prank on her."

"Can I help? Why didn't she come in with Uncle Sev?" Phaedra looked around bewildered.

"Severus decided to take her away on a brief honeymoon for a few days," Tiberius answered patiently.

"She said they weren't going anywhere."

"It was a surprise. She didn't know. He kind of kidnapped her," Remus explained.

"Who will stay with me then?"

"We will of course! And do I have a special day planned for you tomorrow," Sirius boasted.

"What is it?"

"Ah...if I tell you now it will spoil the surprise."

"Uncle Tiberius, do you and Moony know what it is?"

"We do. You can be certain you will love every minute of it," Tiberius replied.

"Will you tell me, Uncle Moony?"

"Nope, can't do that. But I will tell you we all have things planned for you over the next three days."

"Really?" Her eyes opened wide with excitement, the nightmare fading to the back of her mind.

"Wizard's Honor." Remus winked. "Now why don't you try and get back to sleep. It will be morning before you know it."

"Will someone stay with me?"

"I'll be happy to keep you company so long as you don't mind a puppy dog at the bottom of the bed." Sirius grinned, transforming.

"I'll stay too," Remus agreed, conjuring a comfortable chair into a bed.

"What about you, Uncle?"

"As much as I believe in children facing their fears I think this is a special incidence. I certainly do not wish for my nephew and his new bride to hex me upon their return. Harry was most concerned about your being alone." He hugged his niece. Settling her back down in the bed the elder wizard stretched out beside her. "Just don't expect this all the time."

"I won't, Uncle, I promise."

The group settled in for the night, Remus on his small bed with Padfoot curled up at Phaedra's feet. Tiberius was amused with the Animagus. He briefly wondered if he missed curling up to protect Harry now that she was grown. Fortunately, now that the Dark Lord was finally gone, there would be no more serious threats...

"Harry," Severus drawled softly, "I want my wife."

Harry looked into his black eyes. They were burning with passion. Her heart was beating rapidly and she ached with newly awakened desire. Severus continued to toy with her left breast while propping himself up with his other arm to study her face in the dim light. Her mouth was suddenly dry and she liked her lips. Green eyes were locked with onyx. She forced herself to say the words that her body was crying out for. The words she knew he wanted to hear.

"I...I want...you...too, Sev."

He nodded, kissing her warmly. Harry took a deep breath as another wave of heat ran through her. Instinctively, she reached down to help guide his hand with her own as he lay above her. Severus heart sang with joy at her unexpected action. His delight was doubled when she impulsively shifted her legs, allowing him easier access to that which he so desired. Nevertheless, she still stiffened anxiously. Holding himself steady, he refused to allow her to panic at the last minute.

"Relax, Harry, do not be concerned. I promised to do my best not to hurt you and I will," he whispered in his soft baritone. "Just trust me."

"I do. I want you to make love to me. I'm just nervous."

"I know," he answered, nuzzling her ear and tweaking her breast at the same time.

She groaned softly turning her head seeking his mouth. Meeting her lips, he pushed his tongue past her teeth enjoying the feel of his tongue meeting hers. He deepened the kiss. She drew her arms around his back reveling in the feel of his warmth. His loins were screaming at him to complete the act. Yet, he still held off for one more minute, allowing her to relax. He then tightened his arms around her and gave two rapid thrusts.

Harry was burning with an unspoken need as she surrendered herself to Severus' kisses holding him close. His mouth became more insistent and he held her tightly to him. Her mind was reeling when she felt the first thrust. She couldn't hold back a soft sob with the second one. A tearing pain passed through her lower body as they were joined for the first time.

Severus wanted to go on but he did not want to give Harry any further distress. His swift intrusion had shocked her. It was the only way to avoid giving her a good deal of pain. This way it was over quickly. He held her tenderly, smoothing the hair from her face as she looked at him wildly for a moment.

"I'm sorry, Harry, but this was the only way. If I went slowly, you would have been in too much discomfort. I didn't want you to have to be afraid of being in pain," he whispered in apology. "Shh...The hard part is all over," he said, soothing her with his hypnotic baritone.

"I...I'm...okay." She trembled haltingly. She was confused and distressed. The pain was not unexpected but her burning desire for him was now intensified. Severus lips quirked in a slight smile of understanding.

"You are a terrible liar. It is a good thing you told that old hat not to put you in my house. They would have eaten you alive." He teased, kissing her gently, fondling her tenderly.

"That's not true and you know it!" she huffed indignantly. "And I wish you wouldn't do that." Harry nodded towards his hand.

"Why not?"

"Because..." she answered weakly. 'Damn he's driving me crazy again and he knows it!'

"I happen to like these lovely breasts. If you find my actions so repulsive then why don't you stop me?" He sneered, reminiscent of her school days.

"You're laughing at me." Harry unsuccessfully pretended to pout.

"Am I? I hadn't realized," he chuckled wickedly, leaning down to kiss her.

"You know for a former Death Eater and a spy you're really out of practice when it comes to keeping your mouth shut," she taunted, squirming beneath his probing hand.

"Ah...But since we no longer have any secrets from one another..."

"Okay. I give up," she sighed, pushing his hand tighter against her.

"Humph...just a little tweak here and there and you're putty in my hands." He threw back his head laughing. Harry was calming down nicely now. He sensed she was practically climbing the walls with desire.

"I would be careful if I were you. Give me enough time and you may just meet your match," she replied, with a sly grin.

"Indeed?"

"Uh huh," Harry mumbled, leaning in to kiss him, rubbing his back.

"That's what I'm counting on," he stated. Embracing her fervently, he began to move his hips.

Harry moaned softly with delight, surrendering herself to her husband's controlled passions. He thrust leisurely at first, his hands and mouth continuing to work on her newly awakened desires, sending wave after wave of electricity through her. Gradually he

became more insistent embracing her passionately. Harry started to move with him. This surprised him at first but he was pleased with her attempts as his own need began to overtake him. ‘Hold back, Sev,’ he berated himself. ‘Don’t spoil it for her by letting go first.’

Harry’s body was slick with sweat. She could feel her desire building to a frenzy. Severus had helped her to move with him. She was becoming frantic for some kind of release, kissing him with abandon. She still felt some mild discomfort but it no longer mattered.

Severus’ own need was threatening to explode. He was sweating hard with each movement and Harry was trying furiously to keep up. He smiled to himself. She would eventually be his equal in bed but he suspected she would allow him to be the dominant one when it came to initiating their lovemaking. He had no problem with that. He was used to dominating people from his days as a Deatheater. If the most powerful witch of the age wanted to allow it who was he to argue...

Tiberius shifted uncomfortably beside Phaedra. Something had awoken him. Looking around he saw that the Animagus was also awake and so was the werewolf. All of their senses were on alert and Sirius was growling softly in his throat, ears perked, and nose twitching in the air.

“What is it?” he mouthed to Remus.

“I’m not sure but it isn’t good,” the werewolf answered softly.

Sirius was standing up on the bed, the hackles rising on his back, staring at the mirror. Remus squinted using his own heightened senses. Harry had been right. Something was wrong with that thing.

“Remus?” Tiberius looked from one to the other.

“Get Phaedra out of here. I don’t know what it is but something is wrong with that mirror.”

Tiberius didn’t have to be told twice. He grabbed the little girl and ran for the door but it slammed shut. Sirius leaped from the bed, putting himself between them and the mirror as Remus cursed. He had left his wand in their room. Thinking fast, he jumped up, grabbing the

mirror from behind. Dragging it into the bathroom he slammed the door. Phaedra had woken up in the confusion. She was crying that they were hurting her friend and that she had to get to her mum. As soon as the mirror was out of sight, Tiberius tried the door. It opened easily. The three wizards fled, carrying Phaedra from the room. Padfoot dashed up the hall. Grabbing his wand in his teeth, he ran back to the child's room. Transforming back into his human form when he reached the child's door, he quickly sealed the room with a locking charm, warding it against any further disturbances...

Harry moaned one last time as Severus made love her. In that moment, her muscles contracted, sending a wash of tingling spasms through her with a blissful release. She was panting heavily. Severus held her to him and thrust one final time planting his seed deep within her belly.

They both lay quietly resting for a few minutes. Severus slowly moved off to lie beside her. Neither spoke as he gently wrapped her in his arms. She nestled up against him resting her head on his chest. He kissed her lightly on the top of her head while drawing slow circles on her back. Severus silently thanked all the deities in creation for sending her to him. If this was his reward for all the years of fear and pain while spying on the Dark Lord then it had been worth the wait.

For the first time in her life, Harry James Potter Snape knew what it was like to be truly loved. Her soul was finally at peace. She drifted off to sleep, blissfully unaware that the darkness had begun once again, raising its ugly head to threaten her new found family...

Chapter 9

Mirror...Mirror...

Harry and Severus apparated to the gates of Snape Castle, leisurely walking up the tree lined drive. Harry would always be glad that Severus had gone against her wishes, surprising her with a brief but passionate 3 day honeymoon. She smiled unconsciously. Severus arched his brow in amusement, watching her expressive features. He knew what was going through her mind but couldn't help but tease her.

"A Knut for your thoughts; unless you would rather I used *Legillemency*?" His dark eyes studied her with a hint of laughter.

"Hmm...?" She looked up at him in confusion, startled by his lilting baritone. His lips were quirked into a wicked smirk. "I...um...was just thinking how much I love you."

"Indeed, and here I thought you were thinking about that bit of bed sport we indulged in last night. Or was it this morning?"

"Both," she replied, grinning wickedly, unable to conceal the blush creeping up her cheeks. Laughing softly, Severus stopped, leaning down to pull her into a deep kiss. "You're evil. You do know that don't you?" she whispered, playfully running her tongue over his lips.

"I never said otherwise." He sneered, drawing her back into his embrace.

Harry and Severus were so absorbed in one another that they failed to see the big black dog lying in a clump of bushes watching them. If anyone had seen him they would have sworn the dog's mouth was curved into a smile. Tilting his head, he wagged his tail, carefully inching his way out from his hiding place. There was a hint of mischief in his eyes.

"Woof! Woof!" he barked, springing forward.

"Oomph!" Severus grunted as the dog almost toppled the two lovers off their feet, leaving muddy paw prints all over the tall wizard's robes, while furiously licking Harry's face.

"Padfoot!" Harry exclaimed, laughing, as Severus kept her from falling.

"Your exuberance at our return could have waited, Black." Severus scowled, pushing the dog off of them and cleaning the dirt from their robes with a flick of his wand.

"It's good to see you too, Sev." Sirius grinned transforming. "I can see you both had quite a good time." He winked at Harry who was blushing furiously. She knew his sensitive ears had overheard their conversation. "I was waiting for Albus to arrive when I saw you both coming. I couldn't resist a bit of fun."

"Is the Headmaster coming so soon to discuss the syllabus for September?" Harry asked, quickly diverting the subject away from her honeymoon.

"Well...no," Sirius answered, shifting uncomfortably between the two of them. "We had a bit of excitement while you were in London."

"What kind of excitement?" Severus questioned sharply.

"Is everything all right?" Harry demanded. She could sense Sirius sudden discomfort. "Have any of the captured Death Eaters escaped?"

"Everything is fine for the moment," he assured them. "But it seems we should have listened to Harry. There is something wrong with that damned mirror. We had a bit of an incident the other night."

"What happened?" Severus queried, dark eyes studying Sirius intently.

Sirius opened his mouth to respond but was interrupted by a soft pop as Albus Dumbledore apparated onto the drive and walked up to where they were standing.

"Ah...Severus, Harry, I trust you enjoyed your brief honeymoon?" He smiled warmly, blue eyes twinkling merrily.

"Yes, Albus," Severus replied, while Harry nodded in affirmation, unable to meet the old man's eyes.

"Has Sirius told you there was a bit of excitement here the night you left? I would have arrived sooner but I left for the conference at the International Confederation immediately following the reception. I was unaware of anything amiss until I received Tiberius' owl yesterday."

"I was just about to explain when you arrived," Sirius responded.

"No one bothered to even call us in London." Severus scowled, annoyed at being kept in the dark, as they all walked towards the doors of the castle.

"Then perhaps Sirius and the others can fill us in over a nice cup of tea. I am most anxious to hear the story from the beginning. Tiberius' message only referred to the mirror and asked me to come as soon as possible," Dumbledore explained, following the group into the manor.

Harry could sense Sirius was worried. She wanted to demand an immediate explanation about what had occurred but realized that her male companions would only view her actions as childish. Her common sense told her that if anyone had been harmed they would have been called back to the manor immediately. She had to repress a snicker when she thought about Sirius' head popping into the fire while she and Sev were intimately involved. Whatever had happened though was fairly serious. She knew some kind of Dark Magic had to be involved otherwise Tiberius would never have summoned Dumbledore. A vision of Phaedra's mirror flashed into her mind and she felt a cold chill pass through her when they reached the parlor. Remus and Tiberius greeted them as they entered. Tiberius summoned one of the elves to bring some tea and biscuits while they all got comfortable. It didn't take them long to tell the story.

"Where is Phaedra?" Harry asked, looking around for some sign of the little girl.

"She is with Molly Weasley," Tiberius answered.

"Phaedra is baking a surprise for dessert tonight to welcome you both home," Remus added, flashing Harry a brief grin.

"What have you done with the mirror?" Severus inquired, schooling his features into a mask.

Harry could feel his worry despite his cool demeanor. She knew he would never show the others any sign of consternation but would mull over all the facts before conferring with his uncle and Dumbledore on a plan of action.

"I have secured the mirror in one of the store rooms in the dungeon," Tiberius told him calmly. "There have been no further incidents."

"Has the child said or done anything strange since the incident occurred?" Dumbledore asked, eyes half closed in thought.

"She merely asked where it was. I told her it is in a safe place until we could determine what happened. She was quite distraught though. She believes her mother is in trouble and looking for her to help."

"Has she been acting differently in any way, Uncle?"

"No, Severus. We have been keeping her occupied."

"I told her that if her mother needed her Harry would be able to tell with her empathy to keep her from trying to find the mirror," Remus commented. "It seemed to help."

"Moony, you do know that she will ask me about the mirror when she gets home later."

"I know, Harry, but it was the best way to keep her mind off things. She is a sharp little girl and whatever is wrong with that mirror...well...I just wouldn't want anything to happen."

"Yet, you all told me that you could detect no spells on the mirror when she brought it home and nothing has happened since the other

night?" Dumbledore pursed his lips, continuing to appear to be half asleep.

"As I stated before, Albus, we all tested the mirror prior to letting her have it in her room. Whatever charms are on that mirror they are very cleverly hidden. I pride myself on my knowledge of the Dark Arts yet I was unable to detect a thing." Tiberius frowned.

"Harry," Dumbledore leaned forward suddenly, "You told me that the mirror made you feel uncomfortable." His blue eyes had lost their twinkle and he was studying her sharply.

"Please don't laugh, Albus, but it just gave me the creeps. I felt as if I were being watched. I kept telling myself it was a trick of the light reflecting off of it. Now I'm not so sure."

"Honey, I think this is where you can tell us, '*I told you so*,' and make us all look foolish," Sirius quipped, giving her a wink.

"I'm not saying anything." Harry grinned at her godfather. Severus gave a soft snort of amusement, putting his arm around her shoulders.

"I believe we should all go and examine the mirror," Dumbledore remarked, rising. "I will be especially interested to see if Harry senses anything."

Tiberius led them all downstairs to the old dungeons. He stopped at an old wooden door, cleverly set into a recess in the wall. Muttering an incantation to unseal the wards, he unlocked it with a wave of his wand. The mirror stood in the center of the room, its glass reflecting the beam of sunlight coming through the tiny window near the ceiling. It looked innocent enough, but they all knew better. Dumbledore drew his wand, casting quiet incantations which Harry didn't recognize, while slowly circling the mirror.

"Can you find anything, Albus?" Severus asked, watching intently.

"There is a very faint magical residue," Dumbledore commented. "It is some kind of ancient magic and not easily detected. It explains why Tiberius couldn't find it. The spell has not been used in centuries and

even with his extensive knowledge of ancient curses he would not have been able to detect it.”

“Then how do you know about it?” Harry asked, intrigued.

“Child, you seem to forget that I have studied and learned from many ancient Sorcerers in my long life. The residue on the mirror requires an incantation which is no longer found in current texts. I only know of it as I have a Grimoire which was passed to me from my old friend Nicholas Flamel. He told me that he won it in a game of chance from an old warlock. The book was old then and that was about five hundred years ago.”

“Albus, I would be most interested to see the book and I can tell by the look in Severus’ eyes that he would too. When was it written?”

“I keep it locked in my private library, Tiberius. I believe it is a compilation of spells from before the Roman Empire and was translated from earlier papyrus texts which have been lost. I will be happy to let all of you examine it. However, it must remain within the walls of Hogwarts for safe keeping. Many of its contents are very dark.”

“Why do I think this smacks of Lord Voldemort?” Harry moaned to no one in particular. “He knew a lot about ancient magic, especially of the dark variety.”

“Harry, he’s gone and this time he won’t be back,” Remus chided gently. “You made sure of that!”

“Yeah, right, but that doesn’t mean he didn’t leave us a few presents.”

“I do not believe this mirror belonged to the Dark Lord. He was not fond of looking at his features. He believed vanity a weakness.”

“More like old snake face didn’t like his handsome looks.” Sirius joked sarcastically.

“Unlike some people we know.” Severus sneered, playfully rolling his eyes at Sirius, who just grinned back at him.

"Harry," Dumbledore interrupted the banter, "I want you to go over to the mirror and tell us if you can sense anything with your empathy."

"Okay," she agreed, warily circling the mirror. Frowning, she stopped in front of the glass, peering at her reflection.

"Harry..." Remus began, but she held up her hand to silence him.

"I'm not sure..." she mumbled, running her fingers along the entwined snakes making up the wooden frame before resting both palms on the glass. She sucked in her breath as waves of icy cold rushed down her spine. The room seemed to grow dark. Harry wanted to call out but was unable to move. A woman's voice was calling to her, but it seemed distorted, as if it was underwater. It was soft and sensual and would have been pleasant, yet a feeling of discord was consuming her. She got the impression of bells tinkling off key. Something was not right. Her emotions reeled and her mind was screaming at her to move back, yet she was frozen in place. She could feel herself being assaulted by feelings of overwhelming sadness and loss as the cold continued to permeate her senses. 'Is that my mum screaming?' she thought. The voices grew louder and an overwhelming sense of fear gripped her. 'Dementors?!" Her mind clicked into action as she could feel the pull on her soul as the cold poured deeper within every fiber of her being. 'Must hold on...have to...fight them. Think...yes...use thought magic...wandless...magic. *Expecto Patronum!*' she screamed silently. A sudden jolt accosted her body as she was flung across the room. Her body impacted violently with the stone wall. A loud crack resounded in her head as it smacked against the stone. Harry slid down the wall, crumpling to the floor, leaving a trail of blood behind her. She was aware of motion and yelling for a brief minute before her eyes rolled up into her head and she sank into a sea of blackness...

Severus leaped forward as Harry was flung across the room. He could feel the bile rising in his throat, his fear for his new bride evident in his dark eyes.

"Harry!" he yelled, vaguely aware of the others crowding around as he knelt beside her still form. gingerly, he examined her still form with a brief wave of his wand. Harry's breathing was rapid and shallow;

the back of her skull was indented. A trickle of blood oozed from her left ear.

"Albus, get Poppy!" Sirius called, looking over Severus' shoulder at the unconscious witch.

"I shall summon her immediately." Dumbledore moved swiftly from the room, his speed remarkable for his age, to Floo call the mediwitch. Tiberius followed on his heels.

"She'll be alright," Remus comforted, kneeling down opposite the two wizards. "Harry has been through worse."

"Her pulse is strong but irregular. I believe her skull is fractured," Severus said, dark eyes glancing between the two wizards. "We need to move her carefully."

"*Petrificus Totalus!*" Remus incanted, pointing his wand at Harry, while Sirius conjured a stretcher.

"Take her to the sitting room. I need to retrieve some potions for her from the lab," Severus instructed, while Sirius floated the stretcher from the room.

"I'll secure the wards," Remus stated. Pulling the door shut, the werewolf cast his wand, muttering the incantation to secure the room. The other two wizards turned in opposite directions. Severus returned a few minutes later just as Remus finished checking his work.

"Come on, Lupin, I need to get these potions into her as quickly as possible." Severus motioned the other man to follow as he sped towards the stairs, robes billowing out behind him, Remus following in his wake.

Healer McBride and Madam Pomfrey stepped from the fireplace just as the two men reached the sitting room.

"Good afternoon, Gentlemen," the healer greeted. "Minerva and I were up at the castle having tea with Poppy when Albus called and told us that Harry had been injured."

"Angus, her skull," Sirius gulped, "Sev thinks it may be fractured. "She's been unconscious for at least fifteen minutes now."

"I have brought the swelling reducer and the bone restoration potions along with a headache potion and pain killer," Severus explained, pulling several vials from his robes.

"Good Lad." Healer McBride nodded, running a healing crystal around Harry's head. He then ran his wand along the length of her body to determine if there were any other injuries and looked up. "You were quite correct in your judgment, Severus. She has a major skull fracture in addition to a broken collar bone and some bruised ribs. There has also been some minor bleeding within her brain along with bruising. I am going to magic the healing potions directly into her stomach rather than try to have her swallow in this state," he said, taking the vials from the Potions Master. With a quick flick of his wand their contents disappeared. "Now I think she should be moved into bed and I will leave her in Poppy's capable care." He smiled at the mediwitch. "Give her the headache potion when she wakes and if necessary she can have the pain killer then too."

"I'll see she is mended in no time," the mediwitch answered. "I expect she should awake within two hours, Severus," she informed him as he floated his unconscious bride towards the door. She followed him up the grand staircase and into his suite of rooms. He gently placed his young wife into bed and helped Poppy to remove her robes, replacing them with a nightgown. "I'll stay with her until you can return."

"Thank you, Madam Pomfrey. I do need to speak with Albus for a short while. You will notify us if she wakes up sooner?" It was more of a statement than a question.

"Of course, Severus. I know you well enough to know you're worried even if you are trying to hide it!" she admonished, pushing him from the room. "You can put on that mask like expression for everyone else but it doesn't work with me. Now go and have your meeting."

"I shall return as soon as we are done unless she wakes sooner." He scowled in her direction, heading towards the stairs. He reentered the

sitting room to find that Healer McBride had left and the others were discussing what had happened.

"How is Harry doing?" Tiberius questioned.

"As well as to be expected," he answered, taking a seat on the couch beside his uncle. "Poppy will let us know if she wakes."

"I was just telling everyone that I believe we should move the mirror to another location until it can be determined what kind of Dark Magic is at work within it."

"I agree, Uncle. I have never seen anything like this. Do either you or Albus have any ideas about what kinds of spells have been put into it?"

"I am sorry to say, Severus, that this is something I have never encountered," Albus remarked. "We will have to do some research. Did any of you feel anything at all when Harry touched the glass?"

"I was too shocked to notice, Albus," Severus remarked ruefully. "My attention was focused on Harry..."

"There is no need to feel guilty, Severus," Albus' blue eyes twinkled, "you have only just returned from your honeymoon. It is understandable that your first reaction would be for her welfare."

"I thought I saw a shadow for a minute," Remus responded, "but it could have been a trick of the light."

"You know, I still have the feeling that I have seen that mirror somewhere." Sirius expression was thoughtful. "I just can't put my finger on where."

"That is understandable, Black; your memories are still recovering from the time you spent in Azkaban. Even bad memories can be affected form prolonged exposure to the Dementors," Tiberius advised.

"Where do you propose we move the mirror, Albus?" Remus asked, seeing the troubled expression on Sirius' face.

"I believe that the school would be the safest place. However, I would suggest that we wait until we do some research. Moving it now may put us at risk. We don't know what charms may have been triggered when Harry opened herself up to the mirror."

"What about Phaedra? I do not wish to put her at further risk" Tiberius stated.

"I believe she will be safe enough for the time being. You can tell her that we have moved it until it can be fixed."

"Albus, she is a very inquisitive child." Severus arched his brow. "She will notice that the door is warded when she goes for her lessons in the lab."

"Nephew, I think we can get around that. We can put the mirror in the unused wing on the third floor closer to the house elves quarters. They can keep an eye on it until we have enough information to move the mirror."

"That might work." Severus nodded.

"But you said moving it could be dangerous." Sirius looked up in confusion. "What difference will it make whether we move it to Hogwarts or upstairs?"

"The mirror may have some kind of charm on it to prevent it being removed from the premises now that it has been activated," Severus answered. "At least this way we can put it in a secure place until we know."

"I agree." Albus nodded. "Until we have more information we should proceed cautiously."

"Severus, if you don't mind I would like to help guard the mirror," Remus said, an idea coming to mind. "It will be time for the full moon in another two weeks. I could use one of the third floor rooms for the transformation rather than go down to the dungeon. My heightened senses may be able to detect something and Sirius animagus form could be of help then too."

"I think that would be a splendid idea, Severus," Albus interceded seeing the younger man's scowl. "You know that Remus will be on the Wolfsbane Potion so he will have his mind. He would never consciously injure anyone and I know the efficacy of your brewing."

"I agree with Albus, Nephew, unless you don't feel confident that your potion will be up to snuff?" He goaded the younger man playfully.

"Uncle, you know as well as I that I take great pride in my brewing. There is absolutely no reason to doubt my skill with Lupin's Wolfsbane." Severus glared at the four wizards. "I shall see to setting up the room as soon as possible."

"Excellent! Now, I think it would also be a wise idea to talk with the merchant where the mirror was purchased. Molly was with her so she will be able to tell us where they went." Albus beamed.

"I will begin by checking what we have in the family library," Tiberius added.

"I'll go to the Burrow with Remus to pick up Phaedra. We can speak with Molly and then head to Diagon Alley to question the proprietor of the shop where they got the mirror. I can also check the Black family volumes in my vault and the ones which were not destroyed with Grimauld Place," Sirius commented, ready for action.

"Then I shall check both the library at Hogwarts and the Grimoire I spoke of earlier. Tiberius' if you could assist me in preparing a room in the lower dungeons for the mirror and my research it will save time. In the meantime Severus can use your family library. If necessary we can move it just after the graduation ceremony," Dumbledore said, rising to leave. "Severus, please let me know when Harry is awake enough to tell us what happened. I don't believe she will be up to it before this evening."

"Perhaps you would like to return for dinner? That way you can visit with Harry tonight and maybe secure some answers about what happened," Severus suggested politely.

"I shall be delighted." Dumbledore beamed.

They escorted the elderly wizard to the apparition point. He left for Hogwarts with Tiberius while Sirius and Remus headed off to the Burrow and Diagon Alley. Remus would keep Phaedra busy at Fortescue's with some ice cream while Sirius began the investigation. Severus returned to Snape Castle. Heading to the library, he secured two heavy volumes, and then went to relieve Poppy at Harry's bedside. He knew she still was in the process of getting the infirmary ready for the incoming students and needed to return to Hogwarts.

"She is still asleep, Severus," Poppy said, gathering her cloak from where she had put it on the small sofa. "Don't forget to give her the potions when she wakes."

"I shall see that she takes them immediately."

"Good. She may be a bit confused at first when she wakes, but that should pass. Keep her in bed until tomorrow and she should only have a light supper tonight. I will stop by just to make sure she is healed enough to get up but no strenuous activity for at least a week."

"I will make sure she follows your advice to the letter. We both know she has the habit of getting up too soon after an injury."

"As does her husband," Poppy replied, shaking her head, cracking a smile.

"Madam Pomfrey, I have always followed your instructions in regards to my healing. I just preferred the privacy of my quarters rather than taking up space in the infirmary during the term," Severus retorted. "Do you have any further instructions?"

"Yes. I know you have only been married for a few days, but you should forgo any intimacy until after I have checked her over tomorrow. She probably won't be up to it anyway." Poppy grinned at the slight red tinge and the chagrined expression on the pale wizard's face. "However, a little cuddling won't hurt." She winked, heading out the door.

Once she had left Severus settled himself on a soft chair by Harry's bedside. Opening one of the books from the library he began to search for any information that would help to solve the mystery of the

mirror. It would help to keep his mind off of Harry's injuries until she awoke.

Chapter 10

Serpents and Lions

Harry was floating in a comfortable fog. The gray mist swirled around her making odd patterns in the endless limbo. She moved forward, at least she thought it was forward, since there was no sense of a horizon. There was only the emptiness, permeated with a dull light, giving her the notion of the sky just before daybreak on a winter morning. ‘Where in hell am I,’ she thought, moving along. ‘This place is like a vast wasteland. I need to find my way out.’ She looked around searching for a means of escape before continuing on. She went for what must have been miles but wasn’t tired since she wasn’t really walking, just drifting along, growing more and more frustrated with her lack of progress...

Severus was not finding anything of interest in the books which would help in finding the solution of the mirror. Putting the volume he had been reading aside he moved over to the bed to check on Harry. She was still in a deep sleep. A frown was creasing her forehead. Studying her face intently, wondering what was going through her mind, his sharp eyes caught the small remnant of her famous lightening bolt scar. It was merely a shadow of its original mark since Voldemort’s death. Using one long finger he moved to trace the faint outline. As he did so his dark eyes widened in shock and he jerked his hand back. The scar was warm and beginning to burn with a faint red line...

“Bloody Hell,” Harry swore aloud, startled by the sound of her own voice reverberating through the void. “Where the fuck am I?” Silence...nothing but silence. “Is anyone else here?” she shouted angrily, opening up her empathic senses. Almost as if on cue a streak of red lightening crossed ahead of her in the distance, feelings of cold and fear assailing her senses. The tinkling sound of a woman’s laughter, which might have been beautiful once but now, sounded off key, echoed hollowly around her. Reaching for her wand she discovered it was not there and that she was utterly formless.

“Oh, Merlin,” she sobbed, a vision of the mirror appearing through the mists. “I am lost in my mind. Severus help me!” she screamed in

panic. Her empathic sense desperately reached out for the safety and comfort of her husband's love...

Severus instinctively checked his left arm where the dark mark had been burned into his arm long ago. It was still unblemished. Looking at his sleeping wife again his analytic mind swiftly noted that her expression was now one of deep anxiety; the scar still glowing a faint red. As a soft whimper escaped her lips he suddenly felt a tingle within the bond they shared. Realizing his young wife's empathy made their marriage and protectorship bonds even stronger he wasted no time. Harry was reaching out for him and she was afraid. Pushing open her eye lids, onyx orbs locked onto emerald green.

"*Legillemens!*" he entered her mind...

Harry didn't understand what was happening to her. She realized this was just a part of her mind but was confused by the mist. When Sev had taught her *Occlumency* she had learned to organize all her thoughts and memories. Each was stored in a neat little Hogwarts trunk, not unlike the one Alastor Moody used. If you unlocked the trunks you would go into various places in her mind. She had one for happy memories, mostly of her school years, one for her life at the Dursleys, and a double locked compartment for Voldemort. This seemed to be in none of them and she wanted out. 'Is this what people in a coma think like? Are they really lost inside themselves and unable to find the way out?' She considered this possibility, becoming more frightened by the idea. "Sev, please help me," Harry begged, her voice unsteady as she fought another burst of tears. "I just want to come home." She reached out once again, and this time something stirred within her...

Severus made his way through Harry's mind, carefully checking the various trunks as he went along. Nothing seemed out of place and all were securely locked. 'Hmm...this cannot be good,' he mused. 'I shall have to probe into the deeper parts of her mind which she has not sufficiently organized yet. It was not necessary during the war. The Dark Lord did not believe her capable of doing more than rudimentary *Occlumency* to keep him from possessing her.' As he considered this he debated where to look next. Then he felt another strong emotional pull. Harry was frightened and confused and he felt a sense of panic.

He needed her to calm down so he could follow the thread of her thoughts. Squaring his shoulders, he did the one thing he knew she would respond to and spoke aloud. "Potter," he growled, "You're a Gryffindor! Use some of that courage you are supposed to be so famous for. Or was that just a fabrication for your adoring public?" The response was swift in coming. He sneered gleefully as he followed the emotional thread, locking onto her feeling of resentment and surprise at his attitude...

'Severus Snape,' Harry's mind responded, 'I am no coward! I'm just lost and confused about how I got here. Can you help me or not?' She hoped she sounded angry but somehow knew it had fallen flat. She heard him snicker but also realized he was worried. Using his feelings as a guide she started forward once again, only to be stopped by a vision of something dark and formless. It was not a Dementor, although she could hear harsh breathing coming from it. If she had encountered this thing anywhere else her skin would have been covered in goosebumps.

"Who or what are you?" she questioned, gathering her Gryffindor courage.

"Don't you know, Harry?" the figure whispered silkily, reminding her of a soft hiss. "I am the thing you despise the most. I am your weakness and will always be with you." The figure chuckled softly.

"Voldemort?"

"No, guess again. Would you like another clue?"

"Not really. I hate riddles."

"Lovely pun, but I will give you a clue anyway. I am that which you were born with and will carry to your grave. I change as you change and with every day I grow stronger. You love and yet you loathe me for we are joined." As the figure spoke, another appeared beside it, larger and joined to the first by a wraith like snake.

"I...who are you?" she sputtered, staring hard at the figures before her. They were twisting in and out of what could only be called grotesque human forms. As they did so, the serpent grew and looked

at her with burning eyes, which seemed to go from green to black before turning blood red. Harry was becoming unnerved and wanted more than anything to wake from this nightmare world.

"Well...we are waiting. What is your answer Potter?" the second figure spoke, towering over her. "Are you so arrogant that you would deny knowing who stands before you?"

Harry knew that cold silky voice and she looked away towards the smaller figure, eyes wide with disbelief.

"Yeessss," the smaller hissed in Parseltongue. "I see you do begin to understand."

"I have no idea what you're talking about," she snapped. "Now stand aside and let me pass. I am going home."

"You cannot escape us, Potter. We are a part or you, both of us." The taller figure gave a cold harsh laugh. As he spoke their forms shifted again becoming more distinguishable.

"Nooooo...." Harry screamed. "You are not real!" Harry was staring at herself. The snake was joining her to Severus, who was leering evilly.

"Oh, but we are. I am the darkness in your soul and bound to Severus just as you are. It is his darkness which brought you to him and which will make you stronger. Voldemort was weak where we will be strong. Severus will help to make it so. When you married him you opened the door to greatness!" Harry's evil self chortled.

"Never! You're a liar. I didn't marry a dark wizard! Severus has a conscience and no dark wizard would," she argued angrily.

"Do I have a conscience, Harry? Or did I just wish to play on the winning side?" the evil Snape sneered. "I willingly followed the Dark Lord. I understood the darkness and welcomed it. A cunning move, don't you think? All I had to do was wait till you came into your full potential. Now, with your powers and my knowledge..."

"Do not listen to him, Harry!" Snape's sharp voice called through the swirling mists. "Follow my voice. They cannot hurt you," he commanded.

Harry hesitated only a second. Then, gathering her courage and tore through the image of the serpent. Severus was calling her name, telling her it would be all right. She ran towards where she believed his voice emanated. The mist thinned as she ran but she didn't notice until she saw a bright light in front of her. Heading towards it she glanced back over her shoulder. The images were trailing behind. As she drew closer to the light they faded, disappearing with a soft pop. Entering the light she was engulfed in a pair of strong arms. She knew it was her Severus, not the inhuman being she had left behind.

"Sev, what was that place?" Harry asked, unnerved. "I thought when you taught me *Occlumency* that I had put all my thoughts safely into compartments."

"I shall attempt to explain later," he answered, releasing her slowly. "You needn't concern yourself with it for the time being. I know you can find your way back from here." Turning her around, he steered her towards the chambers of her mind, where she had safely stored her memories within the various trunks. He then withdrew knowing she would awaken shortly...

Harry slowly became aware of a throbbing in her head and her body ached. She could feel the pain in her limbs. She vaguely wondered what had happened. Slowly opening her eyes, blinking in the light, someone slipped her glasses onto her face. Turning her head, she saw Severus sitting watching her, a smile on the corners of his mouth, his left brow arched.

"Sev, what happened? I'm not sure what was a dream and what was real." She smiled wanly.

"How much do you remember?"

"I...I...felt something...the mirror!" she gasped. "Sev, you have to keep it away from Phaedra. That thing is evil! Where is she?" Harry questioned, trying to sit up and falling back onto the pillows in pain.

"Harry, calm down, Phaedra isn't here. Black and Lupin have taken her to Diagon Alley until dinner."

"Um...I thought she was with Mrs. Weasley?"

"She was. They picked her up. Lupin was going to take her to Fortescue's while Black investigated the origin of the mirror from the shop where it was purchased."

"Oh...okay. Is Dumbledore still here? I need to tell him what happened but it is a little fuzzy. How did I get hurt?" She frowned, trying to remember everything that happened after they went down to the dungeon. "I can remember feeling... cold...and...utterly lost...like there was no more...happiness. Then...Oh Merlin! I felt as if I was surrounded with Dementors. But there was something else too. It...it...was an overwhelming...hatred," Harry shuddered, as her voice trailed off.

"It's all right, Harry." Severus soothed, propping her up on the pillows. "Take this potion. It will help with the headache." He picked up the vial from beside her on the night stand, tipping it to her lips. "You were flung across the room by some powerful Dark Magic and hit the wall. Your skull was fractured along with your collarbone. You also bruised some ribs. I thought I was going to loose you when I saw you just lying there." He lightly brushed the hair away from her forehead. "You were bleeding from your ears and so still..." He looked down, taking a deep breath to control his emotions. He had been more worried than he liked to admit. He looked up as Harry reached out and squeezed his hand. "Poppy and Dr. McBride were here and healed your injuries. You are going to have a bit of a headache and some sore muscles for awhile. Now, to answer the rest of your question, Dumbledore and my Uncle have gone back to Hogwarts. They are going to try and find out more about the mirror in some ancient texts. They will all be back for dinner. Albus will speak with you then."

"All right," Harry nodded, relaxing as the potion took effect. Closing her eyes for a few moments she allowed her mind to drift. She vaguely remembered having an odd dream, which had left her with a

sense of disquiet. Her eyes snapped open as the realization of being lost somewhere in the recesses of her mind hit home.

Severus was sitting quietly by her bedside, a book open on his lap, pretending to read. Watching her covertly, he had hoped that she would not remember what had happened, before he had *Legillimized* her. Unfortunately, this was not the case. Calmly placing the book aside her met her intense gaze.

“You’re troubled,” he stated, matter-of-factly.

“Sev, I thought I had a dream.” Harry hesitated, picking at her sheets, dropping her gaze. “It wasn’t though...was it?

“You called out to me empathically for help.”

“You felt that?” she questioned, amazed.

“We are bonded, Harry. It is only natural that I feel when you need me.”

“When...I was...lost...I kept trying to come home...but didn’t know...how,” she muttered uncertainly. “I wasn’t even sure who I was at first.” She looked at Severus, trying to put her thoughts in order. “It was scary, you know?” Severus merely nodded, placing her hand in his, to show her he understood. “Anyway...I kept on going but...” her voice trailed off, a look of forced concentration creasing her brow. “Did you use *Legillemency* to come and help me?”

“It was necessary. You were unconscious and in need of my assistance,” he answered, lips twitching with amusement. “Are you angry that I invaded your mind?”

“Of course not! I called and you came. I would have done the same thing.” He gave her the shadow of a smile and opened his mouth to reply but she waved him off. “No, let me finish. I realized I was trapped in my mind but nothing was as it should be. My stored memories weren’t there...and...and all kinds of dark creatures seemed to be lurking in the shadows. I kept chasing them off...but then...” she shivered, pausing in her story.

"Take your time, Harry," Severus said, pulling the duvet up around her.

"Severus, I saw...I saw myself. I didn't know it was me at first. I thought it was Tom Riddle. Then, you and a serpent were there, but it wasn't us. We were dark and I could feel the evil." She shuddered at the memory. "You said I was going to be the next leader of the dark and that's why you married me. My other self was laughing at me and the snake was bonding us together," she finished, in a rush.

"I know. I was able to hear what was going on inside your mind as I searched for you. I knew you were terrified about what you were seeing. I kept calling out until I came to the edge of your known mind and finally got your attention."

"That's how I found my way out," Harry informed him. "But why didn't you come in after me?"

"Harry," Snape sighed, "it would have been even more dangerous if I had come into that region of your mind. However, I would have done so had I believed you could not fully extricate yourself from the situation."

"Where was I?" she asked. "Why was it so dangerous?" Her green eyes implored him to answer her question.

"You were not in the part of your mind which contained your conscious memories," he replied, choosing his words carefully. "You were in a part of your subconscious called the Id."

"The Id?" she frowned.

"Yes," he confirmed. "It is a very primitive area. It controls your worst fears and nightmares, harboring all your secret monsters. It is believed that it is this region from which a Boggart paralyzes us, bringing these monsters to the forefront of our conscious, and takes their images."

"So...these were fears...in the form of my worst monsters?"

"That is correct," he responded, taking on his best lecture mode. "Your subconscious brought out the monsters from the Id. You were literally confronted with your worst unconscious fears."

"Oh, Sev..." Harry suddenly burst into tears. "It was worse than anything a Boggart could have shown me."

"Hush." He cradled her gently in his arms. "If I know anything, it is that you will never go dark. Nor, will I ever be tempted to either return to the Dark Arts for personal gain, or to try and turn you towards them."

"But why would I harbor such horrible ideas? Even if they are in my subconscious?"

"Harry--" he moved back so that she could look into his eyes. "--you were touched by the Dark Arts for most of your life. You also knew that I was not always a spy for the light. It is entirely plausible that you would harbor unconscious thoughts of that nature. In fact, I would be surprised if you did not. I may be a master at *Occlumency*, and can block out my thoughts, but I can't hide my inner feelings from an Empath. What do you feel from me?" He sat back, allowing her to pick up on his feelings, as she let down her emotional blocks to scan him.

"I...I'm sorry. I've hurt you badly with this. I can feel the love inside of you and the guilt for your past." Harry hung her head. 'How will I ever make this up to him?' she thought, sadly. "Severus, please forgive me for doubting you, even if I didn't do it consciously."

"There is nothing to forgive. I am what I am. If anything, I should be the one begging you for forgiveness. I commit some terrible crimes in my service to the Dark Lord. It is not fair that I should inflict you with this kind of pain."

"Then I guess we're kind of even," she said. Reaching over, she brushed the hair from his face, leaning forward to give him a soft kiss on the lips.

"You need to rest," he stated, resettling her in the bed.

"Will you lie down with me?"

"I think that can be arranged. I could use a nap, Mrs. Snape. You really know how to make me worry."

"Didn't I tell you life with me would never be dull?" she grinned, sliding over in the bed to give him some room, delighted he had called her by her married name.

"Humph," he snorted, quirking his left brow. "Between you and my mischievous niece I had better keep a stock of stomach potions on hand. Otherwise I may develop an ulcer," he teased.

"Sev, if you didn't develop an ulcer through all my years as your student and spying on the Dark Lord I don't think you are going to get one now," Harry laughed, snuggling onto his shoulder.

"Hmm...then I will most assuredly go gray."

"Nah, you would have done that years ago too with all the cauldrons Neville melted."

Severus rolled his eyes, smirking with amusement. Enveloping her in his arms he closed his eyes. Harry did the same. They soon were both fast asleep, the stresses of the day having taken their toll.

Harry was awakened by the bed shifting. Opening her eyes, she reached beneath the pillow for her glasses, where she had stowed them before going to sleep. She was greeted by the sight of Moony pretending to look at the ceiling, as Phaedra tried not to giggle. Dumbledore's blue eyes were twinkling and Tiberius Snape was smirking evilly. She turned her head just in time to hear Severus' angry voice.

"Black, you flea bitten mongrel, get the bloody hell off of me!"

Snuffles had wedged himself half on top of him, licking his face with a wolfish grin on his canine features. Rolling over onto his back, he placed himself between Severus and Harry, then transformed.

"Whatever you say, Sev," he greeted with his barking laugh. "You feeling better, Harry?" Sirius asked, batting his lashes at his goddaughter. Harry grinned back at his antics.

"Black, get out of our bed this instant or you will be hexed into the next century!" Severus glared at the laughing wizard. "Or do I have to remind you that Harry was severely injured this morning?"

"It's okay, Sev, I'm used to Sirius' antics." Harry winked at her godfather. "I needed a good laugh. Sirius would never have done it if he thought I wasn't well enough."

"That's right. I cast a quick diagnostic spell before hand just to make sure," Sirius answered. "You really need to lighten up, Severus, but I suspect Harry will take care of that."

"Hey, what about me? I like when Uncle Sev laughs too." Phaedra piped up, hands on her hips, tossing her blond curls. "It was my idea to have Padfoot wake them up!"

"Yes, a true Marauder in training," Sirius gloated happily.

"Phaedra, you should be more considerate about invading other people's privacy," Snape reprimanded her firmly. "As for you—" he turned towards Sirius. "-get out of our bed NOW!" Severus demanded, pointing his wand at Sirius, an evil gleam in his dark eyes.

Harry was becoming agitated seeing two of the men she cared about at one another's throats once again. 'Won't they ever grow up and get along?' she thought miserably. 'Sirius didn't hurt anything. He was just playing a harmless joke and the expression on Sev's face was funny. I guess they need to be taught a lesson again. They were actually starting to get along.' Slowly, she slid her hand from beneath the covers.

"Ahem." Remus nodded in Harry's direction to catch the attention of the two men but he was too late.

"*Petrificus Totalus!*" Harry pointed with two fingers, displaying her ability for wandless magic, effectively freezing the two wizards in place. Two pairs of startled eyes shifted in her direction.

"Wow!" Phaedra exclaimed.

"Someone summon a camera," Remus grinned, amber eyes alight with mirth. "I have got to get a picture of this for my album."

"I believe you two are really in the dog house with a certain young witch," Tiberius sneered.

"You would think that by now they would know how their behavior upsets Harry," Dumbledore added, blue eyes crinkling with laughter.

Harry looked at the group and smiled, waving her hand without a word. She rather liked Remus' idea and a moment later his camera sailed into the room. He quickly snatched it out of the air. She smirked wickedly at the two men frozen beside her in the bed. Seeing what was about to happen, they both glared back, unable to move.

"I'm impressed, Harry. I had heard you could do wandless and soundless magic but I have never seen you perform any," Tiberius stated, as Remus began taking pictures.

"I don't usually do it but I think in this case—" she shrugged in Sirius' and Sev's direction. "-these two needed to be taught a bit of a lesson. I can't wait to see everyone's reaction when Remus shows them the pictures," she remarked, turning her attention back to the two wizards beside her. "Sev, I think that is the best glare you have ever given me. However, you did bring it on yourself." She smiled innocently at her husband. "Sirius, when are you ever going to remember that Sev cannot take a joke?" Sirius just looked back, only able to blink his eyes, still amazed that Harry had stunned him.

"Harry, I do believe you should release them," Albus remarked. "It is almost time for dinner and we have things to discuss." He was looking at her seriously, the twinkle fading from his bright blue eyes.

"Right, I guess it would be a good idea." With a flick of her wrist the two men relaxed. Sirius rolled off the bed and got hurriedly to his feet.

"Moony, give me that camera!"

"No way, Padfoot," Remus said, dodging his hand. "This is just too priceless."

"Don't even bother to try, Sirius," Harry smirked, with a wave of her hand. "I just put a sticking charm on Remus hand. He is the only one who can remove the camera."

"Harry, I might remind you that I am in those photos too," Severus stated, arching his brow.

"I know and if you don't behave I will make sure those pictures find their way to the students at Hogwarts! I am sure they would really love to see their most feared Professor in such a compromising position. Especially your Slytherins." Harry crossed her arms over her chest, meeting his sneer with one of her own.

"How delightfully Slytherin of you my dear," Tiberius remarked. "I am very pleased to see how well you fit into our family. My nephew has met his match."

"Why, thank you, Uncle. I was supposed to be in his house you know."

"So I have heard," Tiberius chuckled. The corners of Severus lips quirked up, happy that his uncle thought so highly of his new wife.

"Aunt Harry," Phaedra interrupted, "how come the kids at Hogwarts are afraid of Uncle Severus?" The little girl had not missed Harry's earlier remark.

"He is very strict and likes to scare them. This way they don't blow up too many cauldrons." Harry nudged her husband. "Fact of the matter is though, he is really an old softie at heart."

"Did he ever scare you?"

"Phaedra, Harry was one of the only students who ever gave me any lip," Severus told his niece.

"Yeah, and on my first day of class," Harry laughed. "It was a battle of wills."

"She lost," Severus sneered.

"Oh, I don't know about that. I married you didn't I?"

"My dear wife, are you saying that you set me up from the beginning? If I recall correctly you believed me to be a villain."

"Ah...but there is something to be said for a challenge." Harry flung her arm over her head dramatically. "The fair maiden causing the evil wizard to fall in love with her and see the light."

"I think that whack on the head has caused more damage than we thought." Sirius shook his head, pretending to frown.

"You may be right, Black. She has forgotten that I was already on the side of the light."

"Now that is what I like to see. The two of them in total agreement." Harry beamed looking from one to the other.

"Harry, there is no reason to be insulting." Severus looked down his nose, trying not to smile.

"Humph...the thought that Severus and I would actually agree on anything. It is absolutely absurd," Sirius agreed, while the older wizards laughed.

"I don't understand." Phaedra shook her head in confusion. "What is so funny?"

"I will explain later, Phaedra." Remus tousled her hair affectionately.

"Good, I'm hungry. Can we have dinner now?"

"I will have the elves bring us up dinner here. Harry should remain in bed for the evening or Poppy will have my head," Severus remarked, summoning the elf.

"Can I at least take a bath before we eat?"

"I'm sorry, Harry, but Madam Pomfrey clearly told me to make sure you stay in bed for the rest of the day before we left Hogwarts," Albus stated.

“Since when do I ever follow her instructions?” Harry grinned, moving to get out of bed. “Sev can help me into the bathroom. I promise I will go right back to bed.” Harry swung her feet onto the floor and tried to stand but fell back as a wave of dizziness overcame her and Dobby popped into the room.

“Lady Snape must not get out of bed! Madam Pomfrey instructed Dobby to make sure Mrs. Snape did not get up!”

“It is all right, Dobby. Master Snape is going to help her bathe before dinner,” Tiberius told the elf. “If you would set up in here we would appreciate it.”

“Yes, Sir. If you says it is all right. Dobby will see to the dinner but Dobby will bring Lady Snape a tray so she stays put!” the elf bowed and disappeared with a pop.

“It seems that Dobby was accosted by Poppy to make sure you do as she instructed.” Dumbledore was clearly amused.

“I’m not a child. Doesn’t anyone trust me?”

“NO!” all the men answered simultaneously. Harry curled her lip with a frown.

“We all know you too well, Harry.” Remus smiled. “Be glad she didn’t insist that you be brought back to the Hogwarts infirmary so she could keep an eye on you.”

A table suddenly appeared in the sitting area with places set for the guests.

“It seems the elves are getting our meal in order,” Tiberius remarked.

“Indeed,” Severus agreed. “Come on, Harry, I will help you to bathe and then it is back to bed.” Severus rose and came around to stand before her. Harry reached up, thinking he was going to carry her but didn’t see the gleam in his eyes. “Phaedra would you like to see some more magic?”

“Yes, Uncle Sev!” She clapped her hands excitedly.

"Then... I give you the floating witch!" he sneered, waving his wand, levitating Harry from the bed.

"Severus, put me down immediately!" Harry exclaimed, unable to hide her laughter.

"It's not nice to petrify your husband. It brings out the villain in me," he laughed, evilly, floating her into the bathroom and closing the door. A minute later they could all hear the tub filling with water. Harry started to scold Severus affectionately before a silencing charm stopped them from hearing the rest of her playful rant.

The couple emerged twenty minutes later. Severus had obviously taken the time to bathe also. His damp hair and black silk pajamas with a matching smoking jacket attesting to the fact. He was carrying Harry, who was dressed in a forest green silk nightgown with a matching robe.

"Have fun in the tub, Harry?" Sirius quipped, taking in their attire and Severus' still damp hair.

"What? Sev merely washed my back."

"Yes, I can see that." He snickered at the flush creeping up Harry's cheeks. Severus' smirked at the other wizard as he settled Harry back into bed, giving her a quick kiss.

"Aunt Harry and Uncle Sev are kissing again. Yucky, I'll never kiss a boy."

"Wait a few years, Phaedra, I guarantee you will change your mind." Harry smiled at her niece. "Besides, I would hardly call your uncle a boy anymore."

"Harry," Tiberius interrupted, "if you're all settled I will have the elves serve now so we can get dinner out of the way and discuss business."

"Oh, sorry, I didn't mean to keep everyone waiting."

"There is no reason to apologize," Tiberius corrected. "We all agreed to wait for you and Severus before we started."

"Nobody asked me if I wanted to wait. I'm starved." Phaedra pouted.

"It is good manners to wait for the entire family to be present. We also have a guest," Tiberius gently admonished his niece, nodding towards Dumbledore.

"Yes, Uncle."

"Phaedra, why don't you sit on the bed with me? The elves can bring you a tray too. We'll let the men have the table to themselves. When dinner is finished, before you go to bed, I will give everyone the presents we brought from London."

"You got me a present?"

"We did," Severus said. Seating himself beside the Headmaster the food appeared on the table. Two tray tables materialized in front of the girls.

"Why can't I have my present now?" Phaedra whined.

"Because it is dinner time and we have a guest," Tiberius rebuked his niece. "You need to learn to be a little more patient, Phaedra."

"Aunt Harry, please can I have it now? I promise to eat everything."

"Your uncle is right, Phaedra. We have gifts for the others too. Besides, I happen to know you will be quite delighted with your present. Your Uncle Severus was not exactly sure about my getting it for you. It took a bit of convincing on my part for him to allow you to have it."

"It must be something really special then!" Phaedra's big brown eyes glowed with excitement.

"I think so. Now eat your dinner so I can give it to you before your uncle decides otherwise."

Phaedra did not have to be asked twice. She happily dug into the plate of spaghetti and meatballs. Harry looked at her tray and scowled while the adults looked on in amusement.

"Why is it that everyone else has pasta and I get stuck with a bowl of chicken broth and some crackers?" She glared over at the table, idly playing with the broth. Giving it a stir, she let it drip from the spoon back into the bowl, frowning with disgust.

"Princess, you had a serious head injury," Remus answered sensibly. "If I know Poppy she undoubtedly left instructions with Dobby to keep your diet light this evening."

"I am going to hex that mediwitch from here to Siberia," Harry muttered, under her breath.

"What was that, Harry?" Dumbledore's blue eyes twinkled. He knew how much Poppy used to drive her crazy in the infirmary.

"I said..."

"That she's gonna hex her to somewhere called Siberia," Phaedra interrupted, before Harry could formulate a plausible facsimile.

Harry's cheeks flushed with embarrassment while the men all chuckled. They all knew that Poppy's devotion to her craft bordered on the extreme. Harry had borne the brunt of her ministrations more often than not.

"Eat your dinner, Child," Dumbledore scolded affectionately. "I am sure there will be much to discuss afterwards." He glanced benignly towards Phaedra.

Harry nodded in understanding, taking a spoonful of the broth. It was an unspoken agreement not to mention the mirror in front of the little girl.

The conversation over dinner was light. Harry kept Phaedra occupied playing games while they ate and Severus enjoyed watching her. He looked forward to the day when he and Harry might have a child of their own. A brief shadow crossed his face as he was briefly

reminded of the son he had lost so long ago. Harry sensed his change of mood and looked up with concern. Forcing the thoughts from his mind, he met her eyes, letting her know how much he loved her. She smiled back, her own feelings of warmth and love dispelling his somber mood.

Harry was glad when dessert appeared and she was allowed to have some of the cookies Phaedra had baked with Mrs. Weasley. She made sure to make a fuss over them. The little girl beamed with pride, telling everyone she did all the mixing herself, to practice for stirring potions.

"Aunt Harry, can we have our presents now?" Phaedra asked, no longer able to contain herself once everyone was relaxing over tea.

"Phaedra, it is rude to ask," Tiberius reprimanded sternly. "Apologize immediately to your aunt and uncle."

"Yes, Sir," she answered meekly. "I'm sorry, Aunt Harry and Uncle Severus. I didn't mean to be impolite."

"Apology accepted, Phaedra," Severus replied, nodding.

"It's all right, Phaedra. We know you get excited about presents. Everybody does. I'll bet Padfoot is just as anxious as you are." Harry winked at her godfather.

"Yes, Harry, I am sure he is. Every dog likes a good bone," Severus quipped, sneering.

"I always liked a good steak bone," Sirius smirked, not rising to Severus' baiting. "What about you, Moony?"

"I've always preferred a good lamb bone myself," the werewolf laughed.

"Sev, where are the presents?" Harry asked, ignoring the three wizards.

"I had Dobby put them in the dining room since I originally believed we would be dining in there." He snapped his fingers and Hazel

appeared. "Hazel, please have the packages we brought home with us sent up here," he instructed the elf.

"Yes, Master Severus. Will you be wanting anything else?"

"It is almost time for Miss Phaedra to go to bed. You are to see to her needs as usual in about half an hour." The elf nodded, disappearing with a pop. A moment later the packages appeared on the table.

"Sev, since I am being forced to stay in bed, would you hand out the gifts?"

"Of course, Harry." He passed the gifts out to the men around the table and then floated two packages over to the bed where Phaedra was sitting with Harry. "Phaedra, I think it would be best if you let Harry help you to open them."

"Okay, Uncle, but why are there holes in the wrapping on this one?"

"You will see, shortly." All of the wizards were watching as Harry picked up the package with the holes.

"Air holes?" Remus mouthed to Severus.

Severus nodded. He could tell that Remus was using his sense of smell to determine what was inside. A moment later the werewolf raised his brow and Severus simply smirked.

"Aunt Harry, something is moving in there. Is it something alive?"

"Can you hear anything else?"

"It is talking and wants to come out!" she said, excitedly. "What is it?"

"Well, Phaedra, I will open this now and you can see for yourself," Harry answered, removing the top from the box. Phaedra gasped with delight as a large egg shaped head with big eyes peered back at them.

"What's in the box, Phaedra?" Sirius asked.

"Unless my canine sense of smell is off, I have a hunch it is some kind of snake," Moony remarked, tilting his head. Even as he spoke, an elongated green head poked itself up and looked at Harry.

"Hello, handsssoome one. Welcome to your new home," she hissed softly. *"Thisss isss Phaedra, and if you will accept her she will be your new mistress. Will you agree to be her familiar?"*

"Isss ssshheee a ssssppeeaakkeerrr like yoursseeellff?"

"I am," Phaedra hissed back in Parseltongue, studying the snake. He was flicking his tongue out, tasting the scents filling the room.

"Ssshheee isss young." The snake looked at Harry for confirmation.

"Yeessss, ssshheee isss, but ssshheee will take good care of you."

"And the dark one who waasss with you, he will need my venom and ssskkiinn ass you told me before?" The snake turned his head to look towards Severus.

"Yeessss and sssoo will the one next to him. They will usss it in potionsss ass will I."

"One of them haassss the tassste of the wolf." The snake stared at Remus, his tongue flicking rapidly.

"He isss a werewolf. He ussessss a potion to keep him from harming anyone," Harry explained, patiently.

"Does he do potionsss too?" the snake questioned, sliding more of his body from the box.

"No, but your venom isss one of the ingrediantsss in the potion we give him sssoo he will sssttaay calm and keep his mind."

"Who are the otherssss?"

"The dark haired one is Sssirriuss. He isss my godfather. The one with the long white hair and beard isss known as Dumbledore."

“The Headmasssteerr at Hogwartsss?”
“You know about Hogwartsss?” Phaedra asked, excitedly.

“Yeessss. The ancient one iss renowned for his fairnessss young one. If he iss here it is a good omen. Only Harry Potter would be a better friend. I know sshheee iss a ssspppeeaakkeeerr. I did not know there were otherssss.”

“You didn’t tell him did you?” Phaedra nudged Harry

“What iss it sshheee did not tell me?” the snake asked, dark eyes resting on Harry.

“My aunt iss Harry Potter. She married my uncle Ssseveerruuusss and is now Harry Potter Sssnnaappe.” Phaedra was grinning from ear to ear.

“Then I am happy to have ssuucchh a nicce home. I will be your familiar Misss Phaedra.” The snake turned back to Harry. “You will teach her how to care for me and keep me warm?”

“Yeessss, sshheee iss a fasst learner. We will alssssoo sshow you our other familiarsss sssoo you do not bite them.”

“I will do them no harm,” the snake agreed.

“Harry, you and Phaedra seem to be having quite a conversation with the snake. Unless I miss my guess he is a Boomslang.” Dumbledore’s blue eyes twinkled as he took in the light green snake, whose scales tapered into a dark blue hue. “What were you and he discussing?”

“I was simply filling him in on who everyone is and letting him know he will be well cared for. In turn he will not harm anyone in the house or the familiars.”

“He also said he would take me as his mistress!” Phaedra beamed.

“Does he have a name?” Sirius inquired, curiously.

"I never asked him," Harry shrugged, turning to the snake who had curled up on the blanket. "We wissshh to know if you have a name or if we sshhould name you."

"I waasss named Godric by the ssshopkkeepppeer. He found it quite funny but I do not know why. He would laugh as you are doing now," the snake responded, annoyed, as Harry was unable to hide her laughter. She quickly explained to the animal about the two rival houses of Hogwarts and how she had worked so hard to unify them. "Then thisss isss a good name. You sssaaidd your mate isss from the ssseeerrppenntt housssse and you from the one of Godric. I am a symbol of your unity." Godric seemed to smile.

"Harry, what is so funny?" Severus inquired.

"Oh, Uncle Sev—" Phaedra giggled. "-he told Aunt Harry that his name is Godric."

Severus just shook his head in astonishment while the others chuckled merrily.

"I guess he really fits into this family then," Sirius barking laugh choked out.

"That's what he said too," Harry responded. "Now I think it is time for Phaedra to go to bed. Godric will keep an eye on her."

"I can take him to my room?" Phaedra asked, looking from her Aunt and Uncle.

"Yes, but I will carry him for now. You go on ahead with Hazel and get ready for bed. I will bring him in shortly," Severus instructed, as the house elf popped into the room. Phaedra knew better than to argue, since it was already passed her bedtime, and went off with the elf. "Harry if you will explain to Godric—" he rolled his eyes at the name. "-about what is going on. I would appreciate it if you would ask him to come to us if there is any trouble during the night."

"I had the same idea," she smiled, meeting his dark eyes. Turning to the snake she explained briefly about the mirror and that they believed Phaedra could be in danger. The snake asked a few

questions and readily agreed to make sure the child was safe during the night. He was happy with his new home and pleased to be of help. She then directed him to crawl up onto Severus' arm so he could take him into his new mistress.

While they waited the others opened their gifts. Harry had bought Remus a new plan book for his next years Care of Magical Creatures class. Dumbledore got a box of his favorite lemon drops and Tiberius a bottle of very old brandy. Everyone laughed when Sirius was given a new shirt that had a black Labrador retriever on it, ears flying at odd angles, sitting on a speeding motor bike. Underneath were the words, '*Beware of Dogs on Flying Motorcycles.*' Harry had made it up special just for him.

Once Severus returned from delivering Godric to Phaedra they spent the next two hours discussing what they had found out. Unfortunately, it wasn't too much. Dumbledore and Tiberius believed that the mirror could be some kind of portal. There had been vague references to it in the books at Hogwarts but they needed to study it some more. Sirius had hit a dead end with the shopkeeper. He had bought the mirror at an auction following the fall of the Dark Lord. However, this added to their worries since they felt it may have belonged to one of the Death Eaters who had died in the war. He still couldn't get past the idea that he had seen the mirror somewhere before. Remus suggested they continue to make some inquiries and offered to go to Knockturn Alley.

All agreed to tackle the problem some more tomorrow after Severus finished making Remus' potion. The full moon was coming shortly and they needed to be prepared for his transformation. Dumbledore finally bid them all good night and returned to Hogwarts, declining an offer to spend the night. The rest of the group retired to their rooms and Severus climbed into bed beside Harry, cuddling her close. They talked quietly for a few minutes, content in one another's arms, before falling asleep. Both had been more tired from the events of the day than they had cared to admit.

Chapter 11

Darkness Waits

Phaedra had just come through the door from the dungeons when she spotted Remus going into the parlor.

"Uncle Moony," she called. "Where is everybody?"

"Your aunt and uncle are in the gardens and Sirius has gone to Hogwarts," he replied, turning at the sound of her voice. "Is your Potions lesson with your Uncle Tiberius over?"

"Yes, he said that he had some brewing to do for Uncle Sev on a potion they're developing together. It was too dangerous for me to help so he said I could come upstairs to play."

"I see. Would you like to come outside with me to the gardens? I was just going to find Harry and Severus."

"No, I think I want to go and play in my room with Godric," Phaedra responded, a subtle idea forming in the back of her head. 'If they're all busy maybe I can find my mirror,' she thought, giving Remus her best smile. "It is fun to talk with him and he has some funny stories about the pet shop where Aunt Harry found him," she told Remus.

"I'll bet he does." Remus smiled, nodding at the little girl. "You will have to tell me some of them later."

"I will," Phaedra agreed. Bouncing up the stairs she pretended to go towards her room.

Remus shook his head ruefully. 'It will be good that she is not there since I need to tell Harry and Severus about the latest developments concerning the mirror.' With his mission in mind he disappeared outside, never realizing that Phaedra had no intentions of playing with her pet snake...

Harry was flying on her broom enjoying the exhilaration of the warm wind as it rushed through her unruly hair on the summer day. 'Next to

being in Severus' arms this is the thing I enjoy the most out of life,' she thought, making a lazy loop around the gardens below. It had been three days since the incident with the mirror. She had fully recovered but her husband continued to fuss over her in his own indomitable way. Smiling, she looked down to where he was seated at a small stone table working on his syllabus for the fall semester at Hogwarts. She grinned ruefully, realizing that she had yet to start on hers. She decided to owl Minerva for advice. Harry rather liked the idea of impressing the first years with the animagus transformation. Minerva had always done so and it had proven to be quite effective. She could also ask Sirius to come to class and demonstrate his animagus dog form too. Grinning evilly, she spelled her broom to fly back into the house, leaping into the air as Severus looked up. Letting herself go into free fall, she transformed into her phoenix, gliding down to land on the table in front of him.

"Do you get a thrill from scaring me like that? What if your transformation failed?" he questioned, annoyed. "You could have been seriously injured or killed." The beautiful phoenix simply trilled with affection. "I can see that you are just as reckless as ever."

"Ah, but that's what you love about me," Harry said, changing back. "I keep that brilliant mind of yours guessing." She grinned up at him cheekily.

"Humph, more like you just want to see if I will fall for your Marauding ways!" he answered, cuffing her head.

"Ow, that hurt!"

"My dear wife, if I had wanted it to hurt it would have done so," he sneered. "Now kindly get off of my papers." He indicated the parchments he had been working on. "You have smeared the ink all over yourself."

"Oh all right but if you don't stop pretending to be mad at me I will make you pay." She teased mischievously.

"Indeed. Just how would you do that?" He crossed his arms over his chest with a glare.

"Like this!" she exclaimed, transforming once again and flapping her wings forcefully, scattering his parchments everywhere.

"Harry James Potter Snape! You have just ruined a whole morning's work!"

"I just wanted to make sure the real Severus Snape was alive and well. I was getting nervous with you being so protective while I was recovering," she laughed, transforming back once again. Pulling out her wand she retrieved the papers and gave him a quick kiss on the nose. "I really love you, my greasy git of a Potions Master, former Death Eater, and spy extraordinaire." She flung her arms around him, breaking his reserve. He smiled back and drew her into a passionate kiss. They were unaware of the figure approaching through the garden doors.

"Ahem..." A soft familiar voice interrupted, causing them to break their embrace. "I never would have believed Severus could be so demonstrative in public." Remus smirked, golden eyes bright with mirth.

"For your information, Lupin, this is my private garden." Snape glared. He was more than relieved that his robes hid the erection which had stirred while embracing his wife. "Harry and I were just discussing my syllabus for the fall term."

"Looked like you were really enthused about it too," Remus chuckled. "At least that is what my wolfish senses were telling me." Remus had detected the scent of their desire. He winked at Harry who was blushing and pretending to look at the house.

"Lupin, I can only assume you came out here for a reason, so kindly tell us so that I can get on with my business."

"And which business would that be, Severus, the kiss or the syllabus?" Remus couldn't help but let his Marauder side show, thoroughly enjoying teasing the taciturn wizard. Snape simply glared as Remus golden eyes met his before he shook his head with a soft chuckle. "Actually, I came out here looking for the both of you. Albus has found some new information on the mirror."

"What kind of information?" Snape asked sharply.

"Don't know. He floo called just a few minutes ago. He will be here in about an hour. He wanted to go over whatever he found with Sirius first."

"Why Sirius?" Harry questioned, knitting her brow in confusion.

"Indeed, what has Black to do with that blasted thing?"

"Albus didn't say. You know how secretive he can be. Sirius flooded over to Hogwarts to talk with him and I came to find the two of you."

"You know, he did say there was something familiar about that mirror," Harry remarked speculatively. "I wonder if it could have been in the Black family at some point."

"Perhaps Black saw it somewhere and just forgot." Severus mused aloud. "However, if it were a relic within the Black family I am surprised that Phineas Nigellus is unaware of it."

"Sirius may very well have forgotten and Phineas was not the most likeable man when he was alive," Remus remarked. "We will just have to wait until they return to find out what either of them can contribute."

"It seems odd that Sirius wouldn't remember something like that mirror though." Harry arched her brow, shaking her head negatively.

"Harry, you forget that your godfather spent twelve years in Azkaban. Even though the Dementors feed on good memories they still can have an effect on the others. That is one reason people go insane in that foul place." Severus reminded her softly. 'Christ, I only spent a few weeks there after the first war and I still have nightmares,' he thought, suppressing a shudder.

"Right," she answered, shivering at the memories the Dementors always dredged up about her parents' deaths. Instinctively she and Severus put their arms around one another's waist. "It shows how strong Sirius really is that he managed to keep his mind intact all those years."

"Yes, Princess, it does. I shudder to think how things may have turned out if he hadn't been an animagus," Remus commented.

"In any event we should know within the hour. I suggest we go and prepare for Albus' visit. Phaedra should be done her Potions lesson with my uncle by now. I promised her the elves would have strawberry tarts for her today," Severus stated, gathering his papers and quills. "I had also better see if we have any of Albus' favorite lemon meringue pie too."

"Phaedra was coming up from the dungeons as I was coming to find the two of you," Remus advised, as they headed into the parlor through the French doors. "She said she was going to go and play in her room for awhile with her snake, Godric."

"I'll go and let her know that Dumbledore is coming for tea. She loves his visits. I think he slips her extra goodies under the table." Harry rolled her eyes with a smile, heading off towards the hall.

The two men sat down opposite one another and Severus summoned one of the elves to order the tea. Both men were unaware of the drama which had already begun to unfold on the upper floors of Snape Castle...

Phaedra was creeping through the upper corridors checking doors as she moved along. She had decided to go there first since the second story was mostly suites and she knew that the mirror would have been put somewhere that she was not supposed to go. Her Uncle Tiberius has strictly forbidden her from the third floor, telling her that he kept objects there which he was studying for his trade in ancient artifacts. So she cleverly deduced that would be where the mirror had been moved to.

"I have to find my mirror. I'm sure Beautiful is wondering where I have been," she muttered softly, thinking of the friendly voice who spoke to her from within. "She can help me find my mummy again. She promised! I know she didn't mean to scare everybody the other night. They just don't understand!" Sighing, she tried another door. It was unlocked. Carefully poking her head inside she allowed her eyes to adjust to the dim light coming through the lone window. The room contained some old furniture and paintings, but nothing more. Closing

the door she continued on her search, knowing she would not have much more time...

Harry went into the room she used to share with Phaedra before her wedding. Godric was coiled up on the bed sound asleep. Glancing around the room she noted the door to the bathroom was ajar and it too was empty. Phaedra was not there.

“Godric, wake up,” she hissed in Parseltongue.

“What?” the snake questioned sleepily.

“Wake up! Thisss isss important. Where isss Phaedra?”

“Phaedra? I haven’t ssseenn her. I have been assleep sssinncce breakfassstt. Isss the young one not with her relativesss?”

“No. Ssshheee ssaaiidd ssshheee waasss coming up here to play.”

“Ssshheee waasss nearby...” the snake flicked his tongue scenting the air. “It waasss not long ago. I can tassste her sscceent.”

“Come on, we have to find her. I have a bad feeling.” Harry turned from the bed and the large snake slithered down the side of the bed following behind.

“Isss ssshheee in danger?”

“I don’t know. Ssshheee ssaaiidd ssshheee was coming upssstairsss to play with you. I think ssshheee may be looking for the mirror.”

“Isss thisss the mirror you sspoke of before you gave me to her?”

“Yeessss, I am worried ssshheee haassss gone looking for it.”

“Then we muussst find her quickly,” the serpent hissed. “If the Dark One had sssooomthing to do with it ssshheee may be harmed. Follow me.” Godric flicked his forked tongue and moved swiftly up the hallway, Harry following close behind...

Severus was reading his newest Potions Journal and Remus was reviewing his list of Muggle born students that he needed to contact when they were interrupted by a loud pop announcing one of the house elves.

"Master Severus, I is coming to tell you that Mistress Harry needs you help. Miss Phaedra was not in her room. Mistress is following the snake to try and find her. She asked me to come and find you."

"Hazel, can you locate Miss Phaedra for us?" Snape questioned, rising from his seat.

"I tried, Master, but I is not able to cut through the dark magics I is feeling. She is somewhere in the castle where Master Tiberius has forbidden us but I cannot pinpoint where. The Dark magics is too strong," the elf wailed, wringing her hands.

"The snake should be able to follow Phaedra's scent," Remus remarked. "I will trail Harry and Godric. It is close enough to the full moon so that we should be able to follow fairly easily."

"Hazel, alert my uncle and summon the other elves to aid in the search," Severus ordered, following the werewolf from the room. "She has gone after that blasted mirror."

"Severus, she should be all right. Tiberius has the room warded and alarmed so that if the child gets anywhere near it we will know immediately," Remus calmly assured him. He wished he felt as confident as he sounded though. Reaching the second story, his nose flared, catching the recent scents of Harry and Godric overlaying that of Phaedra...

Phaedra carefully made her way up to the uppermost floors of the old castle and entered, looking around. She and Harry had never been up here on their explorations but that did not deter her. Listening carefully she could detect no sounds but wasn't sure if it was because her absence had not yet been discovered or the old walls were so thick. There were only six doors left before the narrow stairs which led to the attic. Moving forward she tried the first one. It opened easily. Inside she discovered two narrow cots and some old blankets. It was clean and there were various small items on a miniature table about

the size belonging to a child. "This must be where Hazel and Winky live," she whispered to herself, hurriedly backing from the room. The next door also proved to belong to Dobby, judging by all the odd socks, and the other male house elves. That just left four more...

"*Ssshheee haassss gone up to the nexxxtt floor,*" Godric hissed, slipping up the stairs.

"*Oh, Merlin, ssshheee iss looking for the mirror! Godric, we have to hurry.*"

"*Yeessss, I undersssttaannd,*" he hissed back, increasing his speed. Harry was practically running to keep up with him. She knew snakes could move incredibly fast when necessary but had thought that was only when going to strike at their prey. He stopped at a door for a minute and she could tell he was scenting by the way his tongue was flicking. "*Ssshheee went in here but did not sssttaay,*" he stated, once more moving forward. He slithered up to each door and then kept going up the hall.

"*Ssshheee must be checking all the doorrsss,*" Harry called from behind him.

"*I think sssoo too,*" he agreed, slithering around a bend and up to the next level before the attic...

Severus was practically running to keep up with the werewolf. It had never ceased to amaze him how fast the man could move because of his affliction. He could tell Remus was at full alert mode. His hazel eyes had turned golden and his nostrils were flaring as he sped up the hallway, tracking Harry and Godric's scent. Every now and then he would move towards a doorway but then moved on without ever breaking his stride.

"I believe Phaedra may have been checking the doors, Severus, as their scents move up the halls in that manner."

"Obviously," Snape replied, rolling his eyes at the other's back. "If they aren't on the next level head directly up to the top floor of the castle. I don't have to tell you where." Severus knew the werewolf

was aware of where they had placed the mirror for safe keeping and had made up a special room across from it for his transformations.

"That was my general idea too," Lupin shot back, running towards the next flight of stairs. "The door may be locked and warded but who knows what that mirror is capable of doing."

"For once, Lupin, we fully agree on something," Snape answered, following him up the steep stairs. "Shit!" Severus swore and Lupin turned at the sound of a thud. Severus had tripped and was lying on the stairs, his ankle turned beneath him. "Just keep moving I will catch up!" Snape hissed in pain.

Lupin merely nodded and did as he was told while Severus assessed his limb. It was not broken, merely sprained. Pulling himself up he ignored the injury and hurriedly followed the werewolf. He could fix the sprain later. He had had much worse than this in the past. Right now Phaedra and Harry were his primary concern...

Phaedra sighed audibly as she tried the next two doors. The first room was completely empty and the next one simply contained some old trunks. Her curiosity might have gotten the better of her, but she decided to wait for another day to explore them. The last two doors were on either side of the hall directly opposite one another at the end of the corridor. She decided to try the one on the left first, and headed over to it.

Turning the knob, she was delighted that it was also unlocked, and stepped inside.

"I wonder why this room is set up like this?" she whispered softly. The room contained a hearth flanked by two comfortable red chairs. There was also a rather comfortable looking bed, the hangings in gold. The floor was covered with an old red and gold carpet. What had caught her attention though were all the locks on the thick door, which had been covered on the inside with an iron panel. The only window in the room was high and barred. "This almost looks like someone is being kept a prisoner here, but Uncle Sev wouldn't do something like that would he?" She shuddered involuntarily. Backing up she bumped into an old trunk which she hadn't noticed near the door. It bore a set of initials in faded gold letters, **R.J.L.** Studying it for a minute her eyes

widened in recognition. "Oh..." she gasped. "This is the room for Uncle Moony to transform into his wolf so I will be safe if anything goes wrong!" She fled the room feeling guilty, realizing that Remus would not have wanted her to see this place, and an odd draft seemed to come from nowhere slamming the door shut behind her...

"*Godric,*" Harry panted, "*ssshheee's on the top floor! I jussstt heard a door sssllaamm.*"

"*Yeessss,*" the serpent agreed, slithering forward. "*I can tassste her fear,*" the snake commented, forked tongue flicking rapidly. He deftly slid up the final set of stairs, the muscles moving his scaly body forward without a sound. "*Ssssoommoonnnee iss following behind usss. I can feeell them alssssoo.*"

"*It haassss to be Sssseevvveerruss and Reemmuuss. They muussst have gotten my meesssaage.*"

Godric did not respond as he whipped his body around the landing at the top of the stairs, Harry chasing from behind, trying to keep up with his rapid movements. Harry was half way down the hallway when she realized the large snake had stopped. He was not more than a foot away from Phaedra, his body coiled defensively with his head raised as if to attack. The atmosphere in the hall had gone icy cold and Harry was dimly aware of Severus and Remus crashing into the hallway behind her as they reached the top floor but she dared not turn away from the tableau unfolding before her.

Phaedra was standing with one hand on the door knob, brown eyes wide and unseeing as if she were mesmerized. Her lips moving in silent communication and was totally oblivious to the commotion going on around her. Godric was calling out to her with rapid hisses in an effort to attract her attention but to no avail. A silent gray mist was sliding from beneath the door, encircling the child's feet, gradually snaking its way up her small frame, ensnaring her like some lethal kind of rope. It was then that the snake lunged forward to strike wrapping his coils around the innocent child!

Chapter 12

Darkness Descends

Severus flung himself past Lupin, wand drawn as Phaedra's new pet snake, Godric, latched onto the little girl. He immediately flung a stunning curse at the animal.

"Severus, don't stop him!" Harry screamed, throwing up a block. She knew the snake was poisonous but also had heard what he was saying to Phaedra. From where she was standing she could tell he had merely grabbed onto her robes to pull her away from the misty substance entwining itself around her. The serpent's body gave a violent lurch backwards, dragging Phaedra to the floor, just as Severus' curse hit the block. "Accio Phaedra!" Harry yelled. The child's still form rapidly slid across the stone floor towards Harry, Godric in tow, fangs still clenched onto her robes.

Seeing that Phaedra was now safe with Harry, Severus narrowed his eyes firing off a blasting curse into the gray mist. Phaedra screamed, writhing in agony, as soon as the red light from the curse hit the oily fog. All eyes watched in horrified fascination as the mist began to flow backwards, disappearing beneath the door with an odd sucking sound before vanishing.

"Severus, we need to get Phaedra out of here now," Lupin said, catching up to him as he moved towards where Phaedra lay on the floor, Harry kneeling beside her still form. "Dumbledore and Sirius will be here any minute. We need to tell them what has happened."

"I agree," he replied tersely. Wincing in pain he quickly masked his expression and crouched down beside his wife and niece.

"Sev, are you okay?" Harry whispered softly. She hadn't missed his brief lapse.

"I'm fine, merely a sprained ankle. How is Phaedra?"

"I can't tell. I am getting some really weird readings from my wand. I haven't tried to use my empathic ability yet since I'm not sure what has happened. I don't want to make things worse."

"Let me try. You don't have as much experience with diagnostic spells as I have, Harry. You were right not to try and use your powers. We do not yet know what we are dealing with and you have only just recovered from whatever that blasted mirror did to you," Severus remarked, running his wand over the prone child. She was breathing rapidly and appeared to be in shock. Her brown eyes were wide open, staring up at them with a horrified expression. Her normally pink cheeks were pale and waxen. Godric was hissing softly into her ear, nudging Phaedra gently with his head. "What is the snake saying, Harry?"

"He's trying to wake her up but she is not responding at all. He's very distressed," Harry explained, turning her attention towards the snake. "*Godric, do you have any idea what happened to her?*" she hissed at him.

"Ssshheee was attacked by darknessss. Ssshheee iss cold and lossst. I ssenssse ssshheeee can hear usss but cannot essscape her prisssonn. Ssshheee iss with another who will not releassse her."

"Do you know who it iss?" Harry asked anxiously.

"No." The serpent shook his head with distress

Lupin was studying the door while Harry questioned Godric. His eyes were dark amber, werewolf senses on full alert. He cautiously moved forward, wand at the ready. He was growling low in his throat, moving his wand in a circular motion about the frame.

Harry got the firm impression that had Remus been transformed, the wolf's hackles would have been standing up, his fangs bared threateningly. This close to the full moon she wasn't sure if he would be able to maintain control. Backing away from the door, he gave her a brief wink of reassurance, having sensed her misgivings. Returning to where Severus was still working over the unconscious child he sighed with frustration.

"What did the snake say to you, Princess?" Lupin queried. Severus glanced in her direction, arching his brow at the question.

"He..."

"What in Merlin's name is going on up here?" A silky voice, not unlike Severus', interrupted before she could reply. "The alarms went off just as Albus and Black came through the floo."

Startled, Harry looked toward the end of the hall. Tiberius was standing at the top of the stairs, ice blue eyes reflecting the infamous Snape glare, surveying the situation. Albus was standing beside him with a grave expression. Sirius brought up the rear, swearing under his breath at the sight of the little girl.

"Uncle, Phaedra has been attacked," Severus solemnly spoke over his shoulder. "She is unresponsive. I am not certain what is wrong with her but there seems to be no physical injury." He continued moving his wand vertically over the child as the others approached.

"Severus, let me check the child," Albus' gentle voice prompted from behind his back.

The younger wizard moved aside with a nod, helping Harry to her feet. She pocketed her wand in her sleeve, hissing at Godric to climb onto her, reaching forward to give him access to her hand. Dumbledore slowly moved his wand in a semi circle around Phaedra, muttering a strange incantation. His wand glowed purple. Closing his eyes he was unable to hide the anguish reflected on his ancient features.

"What is it Albus?" Tiberius whispered.

"What did that bloody mirror do to her?" Sirius demanded, pacing up and down.

"I believe we should take Phaedra and put her to bed for the time being. I will tell you what I believe is wrong with the child once she has been safely removed from here. Then we can discuss what Sirius and I have learned about the mirror.

"Albus, I need to see the mirror. It is the only way to be certain of our discovery," Sirius said, running his hand through his curly black hair.

"It would be best if the child is removed from here first. Her presence may make things worse. It is obvious that she is in grave danger."

"Hazel! Dobby!" Tiberius summoned the elves who appeared with two loud pops.

"Master Tiberius," Hazel responded, curtseying as Dobby bowed in unison. "Yous summoned us?"

"Take Miss Phaedra down and put her to bed. See that one of you is with her at all times."

"Oh, mys poor little mistress," Hazel sobbed, looking at the still staring child. "She's is dead!"

"No, Missus Hazel. She's is spelled with dark magic," Dobby soothed, patting the elder elf on the back. "Dobby can feel it around her, can't you?"

"My...my...magics for sensing is growing old. I is over two hundred," she sniffed.

"Dobby is right, Hazel," Severus affirmed, bending down to close the child's eyes and pick her up.

"Wes will take good care of Miss Phaedra," Dobby promised. Pointing one of his long fingers he levitated the little girl from Severus' arms.

"Godric will stay with you too," Harry stated. He can alert all of us if Phaedra's condition changes." Harry turned to the snake and hissed her instructions. Settling the serpent on the child's stomach, she nodded to Hazel and Dobby, watching as Dobby floated the little girl toward the stairs.

"I is going to get her clothes ready and put her to bed. We will keep Miss Phaedra safe, Masters Snape. Wes all loves Miss Phaedra." Baleful eyes looked up at Tiberius as she curtseyed before disappearing with a pop.

"All right, Severus, tell me what happened to Phaedra," Tiberius questioned.

Despite the gravity of the situation, Harry had to suppress the urge to giggle, as the elder Snape glared at his nephew. It was Snape vs.

Snape and Harry was not sure which one would win as they looked at one another. Severus was the first to lower his eyes.

“She came upstairs after her lesson and told me she was going to play in her room,” Lupin interjected on Severus’ behalf. “I had no reason to believe she was lying.”

“Harry and I were in the garden. When we came in with Lupin Harry went to find Phaedra to tell her Albus was coming for tea.”

“Only she wasn’t in her room and Godric hadn’t seen her,” Harry explained. “I had a bad feeling and went to look for her. I told the elves to let Sev and Remus know. Godric and I followed her up here but we were too late. She was being held by some kind of magical mist just outside the door. If only I had been here sooner, then...”

“No, Harry, this is NOT. YOUR. FAULT,” Tiberius soberly enunciated each word. “If it is anyone’s fault it is mine. I should never have allowed Phaedra to come up from the dungeons alone.”

“I am also to blame, Princess. I should have realized she would go and look for the mirror. It is too nice of a day for her not to want to be outside.”

“I know,” Harry shook her head, “but it still comes back to me. I was the one who took her shopping that day. If I had been with her in the shop maybe she would never have dragged the damn mirror home!”

“Harry, the point is moot now.” Severus put his hand on her shoulder. “What we need to do is focus on getting Phaedra to wake up. Albus what exactly has happened to her?”

“Tiberius, I think you suspect what I am about to say.” He looked over his half moon spectacles at the other wizard, no twinkle in the vivid blue eyes.

“I do, although the practice was outlawed over two hundred years ago. I believed it to be a lost art.”

"As did I, Tiberius, as did I..." Dumbledore let his voice trail off. All of them could tell he was worried. Harry could feel the brief tendrils of fear creeping slowly up her spine, stomach twisting with worry.

"Please, Albus, let me see the mirror." Sirius stalked over to the door.

"Hold on, Black. I still want an explanation as to what has happened to my niece." Severus scowled in the other man's direction.

"Severus, I wish I were wrong but I believe that Phaedra has been placed into a state of thrall." The three younger men gasped as Harry looked on in confusion.

"Headmaster, what is that? You are all radiating a sense of panic and despair at the same time and I am having trouble blocking it." Harry was beginning to tremble. She was getting really scared now. "You're all acting as if Phaedra were dying!"

"Hush, Harry, Phaedra will come back to us and everything will be all right." Severus encircled Harry with his arms but Harry could tell he was more than worried.

"Please tell me what is wrong with her. What is this thrall?"

"Harry," Sirius began slowly, "when someone is in thrall it means that their soul is in a state of bond or slavery to another."

"Like when my scar used to link me with Voldemort?"

"Not exactly," Tiberius responded. "You still had free will and were able to control the situation. Phaedra can't. Her soul has been literally tied to her bondsman."

"Like being possessed?" Harry shuddered. She couldn't help but remember what it had been like all those years ago when Voldemort had possessed her in the Department of Mysteries.

"The two are similar yet not the same," Dumbledore answered. "Phaedra is aware of what is going on. When one is possessed they have no control and are not really aware of what is happening around them."

"In short, she has been enslaved by someone or something." Tiberius frowned, icy blue eyes reflecting his misery.

"How do we get her back? Surely she can be freed from whatever it is? Can't we just break the damn mirror?"

"NO!" the five shouted in unison.

"That would give whatever is holding onto her free reign. We would loose her completely," Severus explained.

"Albus, we need to look at the mirror. If we are right at least it is a place to start," Sirius interrupted, before Harry could pose another question.

"I agree. However, we need to proceed with caution. Harry, it may be better if you don't come in with us."

"No way! I promise not to get too close. Whatever is taking over my niece has already attacked me too. I refuse to stay away." Harry glared at the four men, hands on her hips, defying them to argue. She could sense the feelings of pride from Severus, although his face remained impassive. "Phaedra is family and no one attacks my family and gets away with it!" she stormed, unaware of the blue aura surrounding her. "Everyone get the hell out of my way." Pushing her way past the five wizards, Harry could feel the power flowing through her body from her magical core. "*Bombarda*," she yelled, raising her hand towards the door. The force of her spell caused the door to glow white, collapsing the wards, the door bursting inwards. It was hanging at a lopsided angle by one unbroken hinge. Moving to pocket her wand, she realized that it was still in her sleeve. Stunned, she stared at her hand in surprise, mouth hanging open in shock.

"Impressive bit of wandless magic, Harry, but you needn't have blasted the door open. I would have opened it," Tiberius commented, lips twisted up in the proverbial Snape sneer.

"It is the impulsive Gryffindor in her, Uncle."

"I am aware of that, Severus. You really need to work on controlling her emotions, to make her use her Slytherin side, so she will consider her actions first."

"I have been trying but she really has presented a challenge in that respect," Snape sighed, placing one long finger on his wife's chin to push her mouth closed.

"I...I didn't mean to....I'm sorry, Uncle Tiberius," she stuttered, looking sideways over at her new in- law.

"I certainly hope so. It wouldn't do to bring down the walls on top of us, Harry," Tiberius snorted, suppressing a chuckle.

"They're just teasing you love," Sirius whispered in her ear, her magic having distracted him from the desire to check out the mirror. "Snakes have a rather dry sense of humor. I thought you realized that."

"Oh...oh yeah." Harry shook her head, cheeks flaming.

"I believe Sirius needs to verify our information about the mirror," Dumbledore interrupted, blue eyes twinkling at Harry. "However, for safety's sake it would be best if you let us enter first, Child." He placed a gnarled hand on her head, blue eyes becoming serious as he studied her over his half moon spectacles.

"Yes, Albus," Harry conceded.

"Tiberius, if you would accompany me first? Once we are sure there is no more current activity from the mirror the rest of you may enter," Dumbledore instructed, waving Tiberius along side. The two men disappeared up the hall, wands drawn, entering the room.

Sirius was pacing restlessly, while Remus was using his werewolf senses to listen intently to the soft voices from the two wizards within. Severus stood ramrod straight and didn't move a muscle or say a word, until Harry began to fidget. Arching his brow, he deftly snaked one arm around her waist, containing the nervous energy her anxiety had brought on. He knew that the older wizards would work swiftly and a few minutes wait was to be expected. He was also aware that

Harry was about to go into her restless Gryffindor mode, leaping into a possibly dangerous situation without thinking it through, despite her promise to Albus to wait. Sirius' pacing was not making the wait any easier.

"Black, will you stop that infernal pacing?! You're making Harry nervous." He glared at Sirius.

"It's okay, Padfoot, just don't wear a hole in the floor. I think I did enough damage for one day," Harry quipped. She didn't need the two men to start an argument.

"See, she doesn't seem to mind me pacing," Sirius said, glaring back at Severus. "Harry knows I pace when I'm worried."

"Perhaps you should try chasing your tail instead. If you get dizzy enough you may just pass out and we won't have to put up with your incessant movement," Snape snapped back.

"And why don't you just fly on back to your dungeon cave, you overgrown bat!"

"Try and make me you mangy cur!" Snape glowered, drawing his wand.

"Once I'm done with you there'll be nothing left but bat guano!" Sirius flashed his wand in Severus' face, as the two rounded on one another.

"Stop it," Harry whispered, green eyes wide. The stress and worry about Phaedra was starting to take its toll. She did not need her godfather and husband acting like ten year olds. Their behavior was wrecking havoc with her empathic senses and she was fighting to maintain control of her temper as well as her magic. "Please...stop...it," she begged, her features reflecting her distress as she watched them square off.

"*Expelliarmus*," Lupin shouted, with a low growl. Pointing his wand at the two glaring wizards, he deftly grabbed theirs in his other hand, as they sailed over to him. "Look at what you two idiots are doing to Harry!" he reprimanded, moving to her side. "It's all right, Princess,

just calm down now," he soothed, rubbing circles in her back. "They're just acting out their frustration with the mirror by letting off steam at one another. You know they would never really hurt each other."

"Lupin's right, Harry, your godfather and I have been at this since we were kids." Severus pulled her into a hug. "We were simply letting off steam."

"Honey, I'm sorry. I didn't mean for you to almost lose control. Sometimes I forget our emotions can make your senses go haywire," Sirius apologized. "Forgive me, kiddo?" He flashed his best smile, brushing the hair from her forehead.

Harry raised her head from where she had rested it on Severus' chest and stood back, solemnly looking at the two men.

"Harry?" they questioned, in unison, when she didn't speak right away.

"I am going to say this only once," she spoke through gritted teeth. "I am worried and scared for Phaedra and I do not need the two of you starting your silly feud back up. You are both thirty-nine years old and it's time you started acting like it. You're both bound to me by the Rights of the Protectorship and in Sev's case the Rite of Union too. I love you both dearly but every time either of you insults or belittles the other it hurts. I can usually just shrug it off to petty jealousy and childhood rivalries but not right now. So, until this business with the mirror is finished, if either of you gets out of line again, I will see to it that you have no choice but to behave." Harry took a deep breath and looked her godfather in the eyes. "Padfoot, I know you have a short fuse but if you can't control yourself and attack Severus once more I will force you to transform and cast a spell to prevent you from turning yourself back and confine you to the kennel with Hannibal and Snuffles," she said, referring to both her and Phaedra's dogs. "You will stay that way until I decide otherwise and I know how you hate to be confined."

"Hell hath no fury," Severus snorted, arching his brow, amused by Harry's show of defiance. Harry met his dark eyes with a sneer to match one of his own.

"You won't be amused by what I plan for you my beloved husband," she informed him sarcastically. "You seem to forget that one of my animagus forms is a snake. I may be a constrictor but I still have fangs. If you use any of your nasty hexes on Sirius I will wrap myself around you and sink those fangs into a certain part of your anatomy to give new meaning to the term oral sex!" All three men couldn't help but cringe and Severus gave her a rare blink. "Do you both understand me?"

"Yes, Ma'am." Sirius agreed, with a mock salute, and Remus just rolled his eyes at his lover.

"Immensely," Severus answered. "I believe it would be prudent on my part if I slept in my dressing room for the next few nights too." Severus was seething inside. He knew Harry would never do as she had said but it was wrong of her to suggest she would use their intimate relations as a weapon. He wanted to throw a good scare into her. Unfortunately, he hadn't counted on her stubbornness.

"See that you do!" she snapped.

"Ahem..." Tiberius cleared his throat from the door to get their attention and they all turned around to face him. "Now that the Mistress of the castle has had her say I believe Albus is waiting." Tiberius' lips twitched, as he spun on his heels, retreating back into the room where the mirror was stored. 'This will be an interesting battle of wills,' he thought. 'Severus has definitely met his match!'

Severus stepped forward to follow his uncle through the door, accompanied by Sirius, with Remus and Harry directly behind. Harry looked about curiously as she entered. The walls were bare with two grimy windows facing the rear gardens. The mirror stood between them, with several pieces of old furniture against the opposite wall. Catching sight of her reflection in the glass, she suppressed a shudder, a chill creeping up her spine. Yet, the mirror appeared dormant.

Sirius had positioned himself in front of the glass with Dumbledore and Tiberius off to his right. Severus was leaning on an old dresser. He motioned to Lupin to keep Harry over near the door. Scowling at her husband she shook Remus' hand from where he had placed it on

her shoulder, stubbornly crossing over to stand with Severus, who was studying Sirius' actions intently.

"Much as I loathe admitting it, Harry, Sirius seems to know what he is doing," Severus whispered, his baritone undulating softly in the quiet room. He was annoyed with Harry for her earlier comments as well as ignoring his desire that she stay near the door. However, he decided not to comment, understanding the concern she had for her godfather's safety. "Don't worry, Black has a tough hide. Albus and my uncle will make sure that nothing happens to him," he remarked. 'Hell, it would serve the mutt right though if something does happen to knock some sense into that thick skull of his,' Severus considered to himself as Harry nervously shifted her weight.

"Sev, you aren't really going to sleep in the dressing room are you?" she questioned, meeting his dark brooding eyes.

"That depends on you, Harry."

"Oh," she sighed, continuing to watch Sirius run his fingers around the wooden frame. Giving Severus a covert look she decided to swallow her pride. "I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said what I did back in the hallway."

"No, you shouldn't have," he replied coolly. 'I think I will just let my precious young wife stew for a bit,' he thought wickedly. 'Let her wonder if I really will sleep in the other room.'

"Ah Ha!" Sirius exclaimed, interrupting his thoughts. Sirius' fingers were lingering in the scrollwork at the top of the mirror. "I found it, Albus. This is why the mirror seemed so familiar! I knew I had seen it someplace before."

"Excellent." Dumbledore's blue eyes studied the younger wizard. "At least now we will have an idea of how to proceed."

"Um...Padfoot...what did you find on the frame?" Harry questioned.

"Yes, Black, I would like to know myself. Especially since my niece is lying downstairs semi comatose," Severus drawled.

"Not here. I think we should discuss this in a safer place," Dumbledore spoke up authoritatively.

"I fully agree, Albus. We'll go down to tea and compare notes," Tiberius remarked. "I shall have the house elves reseal the room after I set a ward of my own."

Remus had been watching and listening to this exchange, werewolf senses on full alert. Suddenly he leapt forward, knocking Sirius out of the way, as a blue flash erupted from the mirror.

"Quickly! Everyone out!" Dumbledore commanded, his full power erupting to cover their escape with a protective dome. Another flash bounced off the shield before they made it to the hall.

Tiberius turned towards the broken door and uttered a *Repario* along with a spell Harry was unfamiliar with. The door glowed red before slamming shut, the magic crackling in the air before seeping into the old wood.

"What kind of spell was that?" Remus questioned. "I have never seen anything like it."

"It is a ward of my own making. I use it to seal artifacts when I travel. It prevents any curses from crossing the barrier," Tiberius explained, ushering them towards the stairs. "I will show you how to do it later."

"I would be interested in learning it too, Tiberius." Dumbledore's blue eyes twinkled at Harry's as she looked wide eyed over her shoulder at the door.

"How on earth do you keep magic in something without cursing the object?" Harry wondered aloud.

"I did curse it, but on the opposite side," Tiberius answered amused. "You saw that I placed the spell before the door closed. It should cause the magic to repel back into the room."

No one said anything further on the way down stairs. They all stopped to check on Phaedra before going down to the parlor. Harry was disheartened to see there had been no change. Hazel and

Dobby were sitting by the bed like sentinels; Godric curled up on the blanket by her feet. She couldn't help the feeling that she was forgetting something. It kept nagging at the back of her mind as she followed the group downstairs and took a seat in the parlor. Once the house elves brought in tea and biscuits Dumbledore motioned for Sirius to explain what they had learned.

"Well, you all know that Albus summoned me to Hogwarts this afternoon," he began slowly. The group of wizards nodded at his statement as he continued his tale. "Apparently, he had come across an obscure reference from France pertaining to what he believed to be that cursed mirror. It seems that it originally belonged to a French wizarding family in the sixteenth century that was into the Dark Arts. It seems this family had some kind of hold over the local Muggles and some kind of uprising occurred. The old man and his eldest son were arrested and executed by the Wizarding authorities but the youngest son just disappeared along with his mother. The estate was passed to some distant cousins who had immigrated to England and took what they wanted before selling off the property. Now here is the interesting part," Sirius smirked, "the name of the family was L'etrange and one of female members was married to a man by the name of Gaunt."

The others in the room reacted as this information sunk in. Both of Severus, brows disappeared into his hair. Tiberius scowled and Remus gaped. Harry's head jerked up, eyes wide. In her haste to jump up she became tangled in her feet, landing on the floor in front of the sofa, as she let out a yell.

"No, this can't be starting over! I can't feel any links to him!"

"Child, calm yourself," Dumbledore soothed, helping her to stand. "We do not believe it is Voldemort."

"Then who or what is responsible?"

"Black," Severus interjected before Albus could reply. "I can only assume that the name of this wizarding family was eventually changed to Lestrange from the original French."

"That is what we believe. But without any kind of blood samples or concrete family trees we are unable to determine it for certain. The Lestrange belongings were all dispersed by the Ministry once Voldemort was defeated and the Lestranges themselves were all killed."

"Padfoot, this would explain why you thought the mirror was familiar. If it was in your cousin Bella's house..." Remus voice trailed off, Sirius nodding vigorously.

"Exactly! I was only in Bella's house once or twice after she was married to Rodolfus but I think I saw the mirror in her sitting room when I visited with my mother."

"How do you know it is the same mirror?" Tiberius questioned.

"Because my cousin's husband gave it to her since she was such a beautiful witch. He magically engraved her initials into the scrollwork of the frame when they were married."

"That's what you were doing when you were examining the mirror!" Harry exclaimed. "You wanted to see if it was hers!"

"I can only assume that it was." Severus frowned.

"Yes," Sirius answered, expression sober. "It was."

"Now we need to determine exactly what she did with the mirror," Tiberius mused aloud. "Albus were you able to discover if the mirror was cursed prior to Bellatrix coming into its possession?"

"I'm afraid to say that it was. But even with the multiple scans we performed we did not detect it since it had been cleverly disguised. The magic was quite old and of an archaic nature, which accounts for our inability to detect it sooner."

"My cousin was quite..."

"I have it!" Harry yelled, interrupting Sirius, and leaping up from the chair where she had curled herself up once again. She had only been half listening to the conversation, when the idea which she had been

struggling with in the back of her brain, abruptly came forth in a flash of intuition. She sheepishly looked around when she realized everyone was watching her. “Uh...sorry Sirius, I didn’t mean to interrupt.”

“That’s all right, Honey.”

“What has you so excited, Princess?” Remus quizzed.

“Moony, it’s Bellatrix!”

“Harry, we have already determined that the mirror belonged to Bellatrix,” Severus sneered impatiently.

“No, no, Sev! Don’t you see? Phaedra’s imaginary friend, it’s Bellatrix Lestrange!”

“Unless you have forgotten, the Dark Lord killed Bella and had her corpse mutilated.” He arched his brow waiting for her to elaborate.

“I know that!” Harry rolled her eyes, shaking her head. “But what if her soul didn’t leave? I mean what if it’s in that mirror?”

“What?!” Sirius and Remus gasped. Tiberius scowled as both of Severus’ brows disappeared for the second time that day into his hairline. Dumbledore’s blue eyes had the same glint in them Harry had seen following Voldemort’s resurrection, otherwise his expression was impassive.

“Just listen to me, okay?” They all nodded, indicating their acceptance to hear her opinion. “Phaedra’s invisible friend told her that her name was Beautiful Blessing, right?”

“Yes,” Severus agreed.

“But what makes you think that it is actually my dearly departed cousin Bellatrix?” Sirius questioned, his sour expression indicating his dislike for his relation.

“Well, Bella means beautiful and I think Trixie is one of the names derived from Beatrix. It means something like voyage through life or

blessed. I saw them in a book I was looking at with name meanings for children.”

“Possible,” Severus commented, studying his wife intently.

“Harry,” Tiberius began, eyeing his nephew’s expression, “I don’t wish to change the subject but is there a reason you were looking at a book for naming one’s child?”

“Huh?” Harry looked around in confusion for a minute before realizing why they were all giving her odd looks. “Oh...I’m not pregnant.” She blushed, studying her feet to hide her embarrassment, before continuing. “I found the book the last time I was at the Weasleys. Fred’s wife forgot it there when she was trying to decide on a name for their baby. I thought it would be interesting to find out what some of our names meant. Anyway, everyone knows that Bella means beautiful. I guess the other one was just stuck in my head.”

“Hmm...It is an interesting theory, Harry,” Severus commented. “However, you have forgotten that even if Bella’s soul is in the mirror how did she plan to get it here?”

“She didn’t. It was just a stroke of luck.”

“It does make sense in a bizarre sort of way,” Remus remarked thoughtfully.

“Harry, let me play Devil’s advocate for a minute. That bitch of a cousin of mine would have to arrange to place her soul in the mirror. How did she know she was going to die? As far as I knew she was one of Voldemort’s favorites.”

“Severus, do you have any clue as to why Bellatrix would have thought she may have been in danger from Voldemort’s wrath?” Dumbledore queried.

“Not really, Albus, since I was no longer spying. However, he had been growing increasingly insane and I did hear that Bella had fallen out of favor because of her competition with the late Miss Darkmoon. She had been failing in her missions. It would not have taken much

for her to incur his anger. Bellatrix may very well have taken steps to ensure her survival.”

“Okay,” Sirius grunted, “so she decides to put her soul in the mirror if Voldemort turns on her. She still had no idea she would end up with her most hated enemies.”

“Indeed, it seems almost impossible,” Severus agreed. “Yet, despite her insanity or maybe because of it, she would focus herself on an idea she felt would be to her benefit. In that respect she was not unlike the Dark Lord.”

“Look, I know it sounds crazy but if it is her what better way to get revenge?” Harry asked, growing exasperated by their reluctance to believe her suspicions.

“Bellatrix could have planned on possessing who ever bought the mirror,” Tiberius suggested. “Once she discovered that it was actually purchased by her most hated enemies it would have been an added bonus. What better way to enact her plans and get revenge by gaining control of an innocent child? None of us would have been the wiser if Phaedra’s snake hadn’t alerted Harry before she could finish fully possessing the child.”

“What about Harry’s impression that she felt Dementors when she touched the mirror?” Remus inquired, knitting his brow in puzzlement.

“Good question, Moony. Wouldn’t they have taken Bella’s soul, Albus?” Sirius shuddered.

“It is possible she is in league with them if they are indeed trapped within the mirror with her. Bellatrix was more than familiar with Dementors having been a member of Voldemort’s inner circle. What are your feelings on the matter, Severus?”

“Bellatrix was often on raids where the Dementors were involved. It is quite likely she has been able to exert some control over them by offering them their freedom.”

“Then I think it would be prudent to proceed with Harry’s assumptions. Her instincts, coupled with her empathy, have proved correct on more

than one occasion.” Dumbledore stood, indicating the discussion was at an end. “Tiberius, if you would accompany me back to Hogwarts for dinner I could use your expertise in the Dark Arts. We need to find a way to safely remove Phaedra from the thrall and dispose of the mirror without causing her any harm.”

“If you don’t mind, Albus, I think we should stop by the Ministry first. I have a contact in the Department of Mysteries who may be of help.”

“Ah...If I am not mistaken that would be Rasmus Riverstone.”

“It is. Have you met him?”

“I have not had the pleasure. He did not go to Hogwarts.”

No, he was educated at Durmstrang and then did apprenticeships in both Eastern Europe and Canada.”

“Harry, Severus, please alert us immediately if there is any change in Phaedra,” Dumbledore instructed.

“Of course, Albus,” Severus agreed.

“Right,” Harry added, nodding.

“Come on, Moony. Let’s get you settled for the night. I can tell you’re hurting.”

“Thanks, Padfoot.” The werewolf smiled, stretching his painful joints, wincing at the cracking sound. “Is the Wolfsbane ready yet, Severus?”

“Tiberius set it to simmer before we came to tea. It should be ready within the next half hour.”

“Shit! Tonight’s the full moon!” Harry exclaimed.

“Harry, I see no reason for you to use foul language. You are more than aware of Lupin’s condition,” Severus admonished.

“Princess, everything is under control,” Remus reassured, sensing her anxiety.

"But we may be running out of time." Harry swallowed, nervously wringing her hands.

"Harry, there are still several hours till moonrise," Sirius commented, surprised by her apparent worry over Remus' transformation.

"Harry, you know I won't harm anyone while using the potion," Remus reasoned, not quite able to hide the hurt in his eyes.

"Oh, I'm sorry, Moony, there's been a misunderstanding."

"If it isn't Lupin's condition that has you so worked up then what?" Severus asked, placing his hand on her shoulder.

"I never wanted to talk about it before. In fact, I put it out of my mind until just now," she muttered sheepishly, wrinkling her brow in thought.

"Child, if you know something of importance it may aid in our search," Dumbledore remarked.

"Just before Sev and I were married...It was the day we all went shopping," Harry began, collecting her thoughts.

"The same day Phaedra bought the mirror?" Tiberius inquired.

"Yes," she nodded. "We all went to lunch in Mr. Chang's restaurant and he read our tea leaves." Severus snorted with contempt. "Sev, let me finish. You have to listen! I'm not crazy about prophecies and divination either, but this is important."

"Calm down, Harry, we understand your reluctance," Sirius agreed. "Just tell us what happened."

"As I was saying, he read all of our tea leaves and told everyone what he supposedly saw. Everybody else's was accurate but I just dismissed the one he told me. At that point I hoped to never hear another prophecy again! Mr. Chang looked at Phaedra's cup and then mine for a long time before he said anything. I think what he told us has to do with what is going on now!" Her green eyes were open wide, begging them to understand.

"If I recall, you actually shrugged it off at the time." Severus' dark eyes were studying his wife closely. "Exactly what did he tell you that makes you believe it has something to do with the mirror?"

"Like I said before, first he told Mrs. Weasley about Fred getting married and having a baby, then all about Hermione's new job, and Ginny's..."

"Harry, enough babbling, Just tell us!" Severus commanded, getting her to refocus on the issue at hand.

"Right," Harry collected her self with a deep breath. "I think it goes like this," she said, pulling forth the memory. *"You have faced much together. Your love for one another is strong. It will help to bond and protect you. Reflections of the past will lead the Grim to the truth during the time of the wolf. Golden eyes shall point the way. Things are not always what they seem. Look hard enough and you will see that which is hidden. The arm of the black serpent shall lead the way to the light, for only the Phoenix may carry the one who has been lost back to the land of the living."* Harry's voice faded off into silence. No one spoke for a few minutes, digesting what she had just disclosed, as she looked to them for some kind of confirmation. It was Dumbledore who finally broke the silence.

"I believe you are right, Harry. It seems the first part of the prediction may have already happened. You and Phaedra are quite fond of one another and Sirius black dog does resemble a Grim."

"Plus it's the time of the full moon," Remus added, golden eyes looking around. "You can be certain that whatever happens I will be there. It is clearly a reference to the wolf."

"Then I suggest Albus and I get started," Tiberius remarked crisply. "It will do none of us any good if we just sit here trying to make sense out of what might be going to happen. The more ammunition we have against her the better our chances."

"Lupin, I shall fetch your potion." Severus strode towards the door. "I assume you will be staying with him tonight, Black?" he questioned, glancing in Sirius' direction.

"Yes. If anything happens I can move faster on four legs than two to summon help."

"I'll just go and check on Phaedra then see about dinner," Harry stated, following them from the room.

Phaedra was still comatose. Harry dismissed Hazel and Dobby to help with dinner while she sat holding Phaedra's limp hand. She hoped she could pass on some of her love and give the child strength. She felt guilty for Phaedra's unconscious state and was worried about the ordeal they could be facing within the next few hours. Harry prayed everything would be all right. She hadn't felt this way since facing Voldemort. 'Circe, I promised you I would take care of Phaedra and I will!' she thought with determination. Transforming into her phoenix, she trilled a quiet song to the unmoving child, sending her all the love she could. Harry never saw the brief look of pain that flashed across her face followed by the tiny smile.

Dinner was a quiet affair. Moony wasn't very hungry and preferred to lie down after downing his Wolfsbane potion in one gulp. Sirius accompanied him upstairs, levitating a tray up with them to the top floor bedroom. He swore he would keep watch on both his friend and the warded mirror room.

Severus didn't have the heart to tease Harry and pretend to sleep in the other room for her earlier faux pas. Instead he pulled his bride close, making love to her with a gentle passion, rivaled only by their wedding night. They fell asleep in one another's arms, drawing strength from each other, for whatever horrors the night might bring.

Meanwhile, Tiberius Snape and Albus Dumbledore were working furiously to find a spell or charm which would help to ensure their success. Every now and then they would look towards the floo in Albus' office, waiting for the call to arms which would surely come, as the moon made its way up into the night sky...

Chapter 13

Through the Looking Glass

The moon shone brightly through the small bedroom window. The wolf lay quietly on the bed, head resting between his paws, ears pricked for any sound other than the restless pacing of the large black dog across the carpet. Remus had transformed over two hours ago, and it was now past midnight. ‘Perhaps it won’t be tonight,’ he thought to himself. ‘Maybe whatever is going to happen will be next month. It would buy us more time to try and free Phaedra from the thrall. I know Severus and Tiberius could keep her in stasis for that amount of time without harm. Hell, sometimes Harry used to be unconscious for weeks during the war. I just wish Padfoot would stop pacing. It won’t do him any good if he’s tired if something does happen. Besides, he is bloody well annoying.’ The werewolf looked over at his old friend, golden eyes burning in the reflected light.

Sirius had started pacing about an hour ago. He hated sitting still, especially when there may be some kind of action going on. The anxiety was starting to get to him. He was worried about what might happen. He knew his cousin Bellatrix. She would stop at nothing to get revenge. Her madness only compounded the problem. Sirius froze suddenly in mid stride as his sensitive hearing picked up a sound in the hall and Moony’s head jerked up. Both canines turned their heads simultaneously towards the direction of the sound, noses twitching, trying to catch any scent from the would be intruder. Each visibly relaxed as the soft thud, thud, of bare feet came closer and they detected the familiar smell of Dobby. He was making his nightly patrol as Tiberius had ordered him to before returning to Hogwarts with Albus. Hazel had stayed with Phaedra. The two canines listened intently as the house elf’s presence drew up towards their door and stopped.

“Masters Black and Lupin is yous both there?” he questioned nervously. The elf was more than aware that Lupin was a werewolf and had no desire to test the efficacy of the potion by entering the room unless it was absolutely necessary.

“Woof.” Sirius soft bark came in response, followed by a soft snuffling.

"I is almost finished and just has to check the wards on the mirror room. Everyone be's sleeping. Miss Phaedra has not moved."

Sirius snuffled again in understanding as Dobby shuffled off down the hall towards the warded door. Meanwhile Lupin moved from the bed and sat down beside Sirius. Off in the distance they could hear the village clock chime one...

Despite her frozen appearance, Phaedra was in the throws of a nightmare. Her mother kept calling to her, telling her to follow her friend Beautiful to the mirror. She wanted to come back and only Phaedra could help her. The little girl was torn. She wanted her mum but knew something was not quite right.

"I am not dead, Baby. I need to get back to you. Please...please help mummy!"

"But I saw you buried! Aunt Harry and Uncle Severus said you could not come back. Where are you Mummy?"

"I am trapped, Baby. Please come and let me out," her mother whispered plaintively. "Your aunt and uncle lied to you. It was not me you saw in that coffin. They took someone's body and made it look like me so they could take you for themselves!"

"Why?"

"Your uncle is loyal to the Dark Lord! He always has been and wants to give you to him as a servant."

"But Aunt Harry told me he was a spy."

"Yes...he was, but for the Dark Lord. His mission was to get your Aunt to trust him and then he is to bring her to him to be tortured and killed. You and I are the only ones who can stop him," the soft voice cajoled.

"Uncle Sev would never hurt Aunt Harry!" Phaedra argued. "He loves her."

"No, Phaedra, he does not! He is only playing pretend just like you do."

"I don't believe you! Voldemort is dead! I saw Aunt Harry kill him. I don't think you are my mum either! She loved Aunt Harry too!" Phaedra snapped back. She knew her mother and even though it was her voice something was not right. It made her feel cold and lost inside. Her instincts were confirmed when she was greeted with a wicked cackling laugh.

"So...You want to play with me the hard way?" Beautiful's cold voice announced with sly amusement. "Then we shall do so. You are already mine, little brat, and soon your family will pay for all the trouble they have caused me." The woman's voice continued to cackle with a cold evil laugh. "I shall use my knowledge to control your wild untapped magic to obtain my revenge."

Phaedra was scared. Her child's mind was not sure if she was more afraid of being punished by her uncles, for defying them and going to find the mirror, or the evil presence she could feel trying to take her over. 'Aunt Harry,' she sobbed telepathically, trying to find Harry. 'I need you.' It was her last conscious thought before Bellatrix numbing presence took over.

In the stillness of the night, full moon shining through the window, the tower clock striking one, Phaedra's eyes snapped open, iris's rimmed red...

Harry was sleeping peacefully, curled against Severus, her head resting comfortably on his chest, his right arm draped around her shoulders, their legs intertwined. She was having a pleasant dream with images of her loved ones frolicking in the sand by the ocean. Phaedra was laughing, playfully kicking up the sand, when she looked up with a mischievous grin and ran into the water.

Severus had come up behind Harry, pulling her into his firm chest, smiling as they both watched their niece playing. Gently nudging Harry to face him Severus planted a quick kiss on her lips, tightening his arms around her shoulders. Harry instinctively knew that even though she was dreaming Severus was holding her close while they slept.

Harry shifted in her sleep, feeling as if a chill wind had passed over her, the dream changing. Her dream self looked around. The sky had grown dark with angry black clouds roiling overhead, Severus' comforting presence gone. She was momentarily blinded by a flash of lightening before turning her attention back to the water searching for Phaedra. The child was struggling to reach the shore, swimming frantically, a look of panic on her features. Every time it looked as if she would make it to shore the current would sweep her back out to sea. Harry started running towards the surf as the dream shifted once again. She was further up the beach and Severus was standing on a large jetty, his arm pointing towards the water behind Phaedra. Harry's eyes followed the direction of his outstretched arm, a sense of foreboding beginning to engulf her. Her heart dropped into her stomach when she spotted a large black fin in the turbulent water. It was moving in behind the little girl just as another bolt of lightening struck, the air crackling with the static electricity, before being blasted by a clap of thunder.

Phaedra looked pleadingly at Harry as the dark shadow beneath the water overtook her small form. Somehow, despite the chaos around them the child's voice made it to Harry's ears.

"Aunt Harry, please help me!" she cried, before being pulled beneath the water.

Harry woke with a start, sitting up in bed, heart pounding, the pale moonlight shining through the window. Severus jerked awake at the same time, the village clock striking one...

Tiberius and Dumbledore poured over the voluminous Grimwar before them, intent on finding out how to safely destroy the mirror without harming Phaedra. They knew they were running out of time.

"This is almost impossible, Albus!" Tiberius exclaimed, unable to hide his growing frustration. "There is simply nothing here. We are going to lose the child to that dark bitch," he groaned, slamming the book closed.

"Calm yourself," Dumbledore chided, placing a gnarled hand on the younger man's shoulder. "We simply aren't looking at the whole picture. Perhaps the mirror was never intended to be used as a dark

object. It may very well be that the mirror itself is harmless. I think that Bellatrix herself is the cause of all our problems and has found a way to use the mirror as a convenient tool to achieve her goals."

"Very good, old man," Phineas Nigellus' voice chuckled behind them.

Turning the two wizards looked up at the former Slytherin headmaster. He was leaning against the frame of his portrait. His head was cocked to the side, lips curved into a laconic smirk, gray eyes glittering with some unspoken knowledge.

"Phineas, this is no time for games. My great niece is presently lying in thrall thanks to one of your family's misbegotten spawn," Tiberius ranted, blue eyes glinting like steel, barely keeping his temper in check.

"Hmmm....So I've heard," Phineas responded, studying his nails with feigned boredom.

"Black, I swear if anything more happens to Phaedra..."

"Enough! You are both acting like spoiled children," Dumbledore interrupted. "This is no time for the two of you to be going off at each other. Phineas, if you know anything which will be of help now is the time to divulge it." Dumbledore stared up at the painting, arms crossed, clearly annoyed with the former headmaster.

"Really, Dumbledore, there is no need to get huffy. I am merely surprised none of you thought to come to me in the first place."

"So, you do know something about the mirror," Tiberius commented, sharply.

"Naturally," Phineas said, settling himself back into the chair behind him in the portrait. "It was, as Tiberius so eloquently stated, gifted to one of my misbegotten spawn," Phineas commented with derision. "However," he continued before Tiberius could interrupt, "I have no desire to see the child harmed so I will tell you what I do know."

"Thank you, Phineas," Dumbledore answered, resuming his seat.

"First of all I happened to be visiting one of the other portraits when Bellatrix was given the mirror. You are correct in your assumptions that the LeStranges were the same family from France. The mirror is not a dark object. They simply used it as a hiding place to cover their illicit activities. It is a portal from which one can enter and observe what is happening around them undetected."

"Do you know how to get into the mirror?" Dumbledore asked.

"I am not certain, but it does have something to do with the moonlight. I do know that it is most likely password protected. In order to exit one can be assisted from the outside to find the way out. Apparently, once inside the exit is hidden to those who have not been given the charm to activate it. I am unaware of how this actually works."

"You said that someone can leave if assisted though."

"Yes. If the portal is opened someone on the outside can try and call to the person within and can also reach inside. However, they run the risk of being sucked in themselves should they attempt to do so."

"You claim that the mirror is not in and of itself dangerous. Then how is it that both Harry, Phaedra, and your nephew have been affected?" Tiberius questioned

"It would seem that Bellatrix is able to cast spells and the like from within the mirror and she has been doing so."

"But she is dead, Phineas. I know of no way a spirit or ghost can perform magic on a living being." Dumbledore reminded him.

"Not normally, no, but you have forgotten that the Dark Lord himself was not entirely powerless when he lost his body. We have no idea how much Bellatrix may have learned from his experience in the Dark Arts."

"Albus, I think it's high time we returned to Snape Castle. If what Phineas has told us is true about the effects of moonlight on the mirror..."

"Tonight is the full moon," Dumbledore finished, completing Tiberius statement. "It may act as some kind of catalyst for the portal."

Expressions grim, the two powerful wizards rose from their seats at the table, neither wishing to voice their shared concern any further. A cool summer breeze came through the open window, causing the candles to flicker wildly, casting eerie shadows upon the walls. An owl hooted nearby. Fawkes suddenly trilled a discordant note, fluttering over to his master's shoulder. The hairs on the back of Dumbledore's neck stood up. An involuntary shiver crept up Tiberius' spine. The two wizards looked into one another's eyes, each feeling as if someone had walked over his grave. The bell in the clock tower had just struck one...

Bellatrix knew time was of the essence. She needed to act swiftly in order to keep control of the child's body and bring her plans to fruition. The little girl's snake was curled on the bottom of the bed and she needed to get him out of the way first. Deftly, she flexed the fingers of the new body under her control, a twisted smile gracing the once innocent features. Carefully gathering the bed linens, she peeked under her lashes at the elf snoring beside the bed. She would need to be disposed of as well. Bracing herself, she threw the blanket over the snake. Sitting up silently she twisted the cover about the serpent's body, effectively trapping him. 'He may be of use to me later being as how the child is a parselmouth,' she mused. 'It would befit me to use him as my new familiar. Now to get rid of that stupid old elf, she is too loyal to the Snapes to be of any use.'

Hazel shifted in the chair but didn't awake as Bellatrix slid silently from the bed, no time to waste. Hurriedly reaching towards the old elf, Bellatrix snatched her around either side of her head. Startled, Hazel's eyes snapped open to be met with glaring red eyes in her mistress' little face. She opened her mouth in an attempt to yell for help, honor bound not to harm the child, but all that came out was a soft gurgle as Bellatrix swiftly snapped the fragile neck. Stepping away from the body she sped silently for the door. Stealthily opening the door a crack she glanced into the darkened hallway. It was still quiet. Slipping out the door, she sped up the hall on tip toe. Without a wand, the less noise she made the better. 'If I know that Potter brat and Snape they will be aware of my presence none too soon,' she

thought. ‘I need to get rid of the kid’s soul as fast as possible. My associates will appreciate their little treat.’ She smirked to herself. Once that is done it will be easy for them to disable the others so that I can steal a wand and put an end to them.’ Bellatrix was so wrapped up in her thoughts she almost didn’t hear the flip flop of the footsteps coming down the stairs, or the muted voices from the bedroom behind her. As soon as Bellatrix became aware that there were voices coming from back down the hall, she caught sight of the elf making his way towards her in the darkness. ‘Blast, it’s that idiot reject elf from Lucius manor, the one that helped Potter. Dobby...no Dobby was the inferior creature’s name. Realizing that she was becoming careless in her preoccupation with revenge, she quickly formulated a plan to get rid of the elf and make it upstairs before being discovered by whoever was now awake.

All of Dobby’s instincts were on alert. His magic seemed to vibrate with a feeling of static electricity brought on by his unease. He could tell something was amiss within the castle walls, almost like a piano being played off key in another room. The building simply vibrated with darkness as he made his way down from the upper floors. His large green eyes were as wide as golf balls, searching the darkened hallways, unsure of what was lurking within the shadows. He jumped when a tearful Phaedra crept from one of the dark corners. Her eyes were on the floor, and she was sniffling in distress.

“Dobby,” she sobbed. “Aunt Harry needs you. I woke up and something awful happened.” Bellatrix smirked inwardly, enjoying her performance. “They’re all in my room. Uncle Sev said I should find you right away. Please hurry, I’m so scared!”

“Miss Phaedra! You shouldn’t be out of bed. Harry Potter and Professor Snape should have summoned Dobby!” The elf remarked with indignation. “You have been very very ill! Dobby will tell Harry and the Professor they should not have sent you for him.”

“They couldn’t call for you, Dobby. Everything is a mess and something is wrong with Hazel. You need to come right away!” Bellatrix pretended to become more distressed and motioned the elf towards the bedroom, where the voices were becoming louder.

"Yes, yes, Dobby will go and help Harry and Professor Snape! He exclaimed, ears flapping wildly. I can hear that they're upset." He turned in the direction of the bedroom, preparing to snap his fingers and pop in immediately.

Bellatrix quickly snatched a small bronze statue from a niche in the wall, just as the elf went to disapparate, and brought it down on his head. Dobby collapsed at her feet unconscious. 'Now to deal with my cousin and his pet werewolf,' she mused, stepping over the prone body of the elf. She raced up the hall on tip toe towards the back stairs. 'I somehow need to try and get a hold of one of their wands,' she thought. 'I can do some wandless magic but it is risky in this body. The child's magic is still too wild even though it is strong. If I push too hard it could trigger an accidental backlash onto me. Perhaps one of my associates can create a diversion instead.' Bellatrix smiled at the idea. 'I'm sure Sirius would love to see one of his old friends from Azkaban...'

Harry and Severus both knew something was terribly wrong when they woke simultaneously. Harry was drenched in sweat from her nightmare and Severus eyes were wide and searching about the room. Harry could tell he was looking about instinctively for a hidden enemy. Looking at her husband, she slid from the bed, hastily pulling a bathrobe around her naked body. Severus nodded and did the same, controlling his desires as he took in the image of his nude bride in the moonlight. Harry moved towards the door to the hall but Severus grabbed her arm to stop her. Shaking his head negatively at her inquiring look he gestured towards the fireplace with a nod of his head. Better to use the floo and possibly take someone unawares rather than open the hall door and alert any intruder to their presence too soon. With a quick jerk of her head to indicate she understood, she followed Severus to the fireplace, where he took down the canister of floo powder.

"Phaedra's room," he whispered, stepping into the green flames and disappearing.

"We're coming, baby," Harry whispered to herself before following Severus through the floo into the child's room. She landed with a thud on her backside, as ungraceful with floo travel as ever.

Severus would have found it highly amusing if not for the sight in front of him. He was glad that Harry had not come through first. Death was never a pretty sight.

“*Lumos*,” he said, casting his wand about the room.

“What is it, Sev?” Harry questioned, blinking at the sudden brightness.

“Hazel is dead,” he answered dryly, “And I do not see Phaedra or the snake anywhere.”

“*Godric*,” Harry hissed, following Severus across the room, heart thumping wildly. “*Where are you and what haassss happened to Phaedra?*” Harry could see Hazel’s limp form slouched in the chair, a trickle of blood oozing from the corner of her mouth to drip on the carpet. She could not help the feelings of guilt which began to overwhelm her as her ears listened for some response from the serpent.

“This is NOT your fault, Harry,” Severus admonished. He knew Harry would believe she was responsible for the death of the old elf.

“There!” Harry pointed to where the blankets were furled at the bottom of the bed. They had begun to undulate and she could hear a faint angry hissing coming from within. “*Godric is alive! He’ll be able to tell us some of what happened. We have to find Phaedra!*” Harry gasped, pulling the blankets from the bed to free the angry snake.

“*Godric, what happened? Where iss Phaedra?*”

“*Ssshheee caught me by sssuuuppprrriissseee, we muussst move sssswwwiifftllyyy,*” the serpent answered. “*My missstttrreessss iss possseeeessseed by the dark one.*” He quickly began slithering towards the door while Harry translated what he had told her.

“The snake is right, we must move swiftly if we are to save Phaedra,” Severus stated, trying to remain calm. He didn’t want to further upset Harry and his own stomach had tightened into a huge knot. Fortunately, his years of spying and his Slytherin heritage enabled him to keep his feelings in check. “Come on, she will be heading for the mirror.” He stalked to the door flinging it open. There was no need

to be stealthy any longer. He'd be damned if Bella got away with harming his niece and he damn well wanted to let her know it.

"Well at least Sirius and Remus will not make it easy for her to get to the mirror."

"If I know Bellatrix she will be prepared for them. She is not one to give up easily. She knows we will not harm Phaedra if we can help it," Severus fumed, his dark figure stalking into the hallway. With a wave of his wand the hallway was fully lit but he stopped short, Harry bumping into him. "Bloody Hell! What else will that bitch do tonight!" he swore.

"Dobby!" Harry cried, spotting the crumpled elf lying in the hall. Running over to his limp form she crouched down beside him. "Please Merlin, don't let him be dead too!" She was relieved to see he was breathing. He moaned softly as she checked his pulse and his large green eyes fluttered open and focused on hers.

"Mistress Harry...Dobby...was attacked...by...Miss Phaedra. Dobby...has failed," he sobbed, a lone tear running down his cheek.

"Dobby it wasn't Phaedra. It was Bellatrix. She is controlling her. She murdered Hazel."

"No! No! No! Hazel is a good elf doing her duty. Dobby should have been there to protect her," he wailed. The elf sprang to his feet, weaving crazily, his ears flapping wildly.

"Dobby," Severus interrupted impatiently, "Go and summon my uncle and Dumbledore back here now. We're wasting time. Phaedra is in grave danger!" Severus ordered. With a wave of his wand he healed the growing lump on the elf's head and stormed up the hall, Harry running to keep up.

"Dobby will get help," the elf called. Snapping his fingers he disappeared with pop...

The two canines lay by the door waiting, ears pricked for any sound, black noses twitching to catch any unusual scent. Lupin's nose twitched, his left ear flicking, jumping to his feet simultaneously with

the huge black dog. The noise was faint but both heard the soft padding of little feet, the child's corrupted scent reaching their sensitive noses. Both canines looked at one another. Lupin nodded and Padfoot stood up on his hind legs. Maneuvering the door knob with his front paws the door swung open and they entered the darkened hallway. Remus moved to the middle of the hall to block the child's path while Sirius leaped across the hall blocking the warded door. Their muscles tensed, hackles on end, teeth bared, they waited for Bellatrix to approach. Both were assessing how to stop the spirit of the evil witch without harming the child.

Bellatrix stopped halfway up the hall, eyes glowing red by the light of the moon, an evil smile gracing her lips. Sizing them up she quickly studied the situation with the animagus and the werewolf who were blocking her path. She knew they would do whatever they could to keep her from getting back to the mirror but her insane cunning was not about to let them keep her from fulfilling her goal.

"Oh, look at the nice puppies that have come to greet me," she taunted sarcastically. Phaedra's voice had taken on the sensual quality of the formerly beautiful woman, causing the two canines to growl deep within their throats. "Hello cousin," she drawled, glancing over the head of the werewolf towards Sirius. "I heard you and the filthy animal have been married. You always did hang around with trash though. So it came as no surprise." An expression of utter disgust crossed the child's features as she rolled her eyes. "Tell me, do you shag doggy style and which of you is the male?" she questioned casually, baiting Sirius into losing his temper, initiating a deep growl. "You're right, cousin, I should not have asked such a question. It was in poor taste. After all, what could one expect from such a disgrace to our family as you? Even Regulus had more balls. All you ever cared about was your beautiful face and playing pranks. The rest of us had more important matters to attend to, like holding up the Pureblood family traditions. You never were anything more than a disgrace to the name of Black, you filthy blood traitor," Bella jeered, slowly advancing up the hall as Sirius continued to growl deep within his throat, the werewolf following her every movement. "It makes no difference now though. I made sure that your beloved little Potty goddaughter will be well taken care of. Pity the next time you see her it will be in Hell." Bellatrix laughed insanely as Sirius finally

reacted to her taunts, transforming back into his human form, wand pointing directly at her heart.

"What have you done to Harry?"

"I haven't done a thing to her pretty little head," Bella answered. Not yet, anyway." She knew that Sirius would never believe she was stating the truth. Bellatrix wanted him to lose his temper and forget his position by the door, enabling her to distract the werewolf long enough to summon her friends. "However, I do have some wonderful plans for all of you." The evil glint in the child's eyes belied the innocent smile she directed towards her cousin. "Unfortunately, I really must be going now. I hear your little brat and her blood traitor mate, Severus, coming up the stairs." Bellatrix waved her hand awkwardly, Phaedra weakly attempting to fight her control, as she sent a silent *Expelliarmus* towards her cousin, deftly snatching his wand. "*Incarcerous Argentum, Petrificus Totalis,*" she yelled, directing the wand in a wide arc as she dodged Remus attack and caught Sirius before he could transform. They fell to the floor with a thud, Sirius body rigid, the werewolf securely bound, silver ropes hissing, burning into him. Stepping over the wolf she sauntered up to Sirius. "*Crucio!*" she exclaimed, cursing her cousin, knowing he couldn't utter a sound in his torment. She was enjoying her fun, exhilaration flowing through her with the feel of the dark magic. She could feel the child's will wilting in agony, loving every minute of her control over the young soul, just as Severus and Harry bounded into the upper hallway. "*Bombardia!*" she screamed, blasting a hole through the wall, disrupting the wards to bypass the door.

"Bellatrix, release my niece now or suffer the consequences!" Snape roared, racing up the hall, Harry on his heels.

"You're too late, Severus. Soon I'll have all I ever desired and no one will be able to stop me," Bella shrieked madly. "*Crucio!*" She shot the curse towards Severus. He dodged swiftly to the side as Harry came up short from behind him, the curse hitting her full in the chest. She fell to the floor in agony, curling into a fetal position, refusing to give Bella the satisfaction of hearing her cry out.

"Harry!" Severus gasped, realizing what had happened. "*Finite Incantatum.*" He quickly cancelled the curse, pulling Harry to her feet in one fluid motion, silently berating himself for not having any of the anti cruciatus potion in his robes.

"Sev, I'm okay," Harry panted. "We have to stop her, help Moony and Sirius!" She sprang forward as Bella turned away.

"You'll never be in time, Potty," Bella goaded, stepping over the rubble disappearing through the hole in the wall. "Phaedra's body is already mine and her soul will soon be forfeit," she cackled over her shoulder.

"Never, you filthy bitch!" Harry screamed, racing after her.

"Harry NO!" Severus yelled. "Wait for us!" He strode after her, freeing the bound wizards in the process. "*Bloody Gryffindor bravery,*" he thought, "*When will she ever learn?*" He vanished into the hole leaving the other two to recover on their own, knowing they would follow as soon as possible....

Dobby popped into the Headmaster's office at Hogwarts just as Tiberius disappeared through the floo back to Snape castle. Frustrated, the elf once again snapped his fingers to return to the castle. Popping into the parlor he found the two men dusting themselves off and looking around worriedly.

"Headmaster Dumbledore, Master Snape, we's is needing help! The evil witch has killed Hazel and taken Miss Phaedra! Mistress Harry and the young Master Snape is going after her. They's is heading to the mirror room."

"Dobby, alert the other elves and release the dogs onto the property in case she tries to leave the castle. Guard all exits," Tiberius ordered while Dumbledore muttered antiapparation wards. "She must not escape."

"Right away, Master Snape." Dobby did not wait for a response as he popped out.

"We must hurry, Tiberius, there may not be much time." Dumbledore was already moving rapidly towards the hall and up the stairs. Tiberius followed, awed at the powerful aura surrounding the old man, as he took the steps two at a time. They reached the upper floor in time to see Severus disappear into the hole and Sirius hobbling over to the werewolf.

"Sirius, what has happened?"

"Albus, she got passed us and got hold of my wand," he said, trembling, the after effects of the Cruciatus curse evident. "She is controlling Phaedra. Remus has been burned. The bloody bitch used silver ropes on him." Remus whined in response, struggling to get to his feet.

"*Accio* burn paste, *Accio* anti cruciatus potion." Tiberius summoned the healing potions with a wave of his wand. Within a minute both came sailing up the hall. "Here, take this." He thrust Sirius a vial. "Rub this into his burns," Tiberius directed, indicating the jar. "It doesn't appear he has absorbed too much poison and it will help to counteract any further contamination until he can be seen."

As Tiberius tended to the animagus and the werewolf, Dumbledore rapidly surveyed the area. He flicked his wand, repairing the wall. Another swish and an incantation removed the wards on the door. It swung open slowly, flashes of colored light greeting his steely blue eyes...

Harry had charged into the room at top speed and latched onto the back of Phaedra's nightgown. Forcefully she pulled her backwards but Bellatrix spun around in her grasp and knocked Harry off her feet. Harry immediately put up a shield, and rolled away while Bella attempted to fire off an Avadra Kedavra which bounced off the door, as Severus came through the hole in the wall. His face was set in a furious scowl, wand raised to fire off a curse to stun his possessed niece, as he put up a shield. However, Bellatrix didn't fire. She simply muttered a spell, causing the glass to shimmer. No longer solid, a dark gateway was revealed where there had once been glass.

"NO!" Harry screamed, throwing herself forward, crashing into Bellatrix's back. Too late she realized her momentum had shoved the

child's body forward, causing them both to tumble head first into the mirror. The evil witch was cackling with glee at Harry's mistake.

"HARRY!" Severus frenzied cry echoed around the room as the wall repaired itself and the door swung open. He caught sight of Albus and his uncle from the corner of his eye as he dashed across the room, unable to stifle a sob when he reached the mirror. The glass was once again solid. Harry and Phaedra were gone...

Chapter 14

Inside Out and Outside In

Harry and Bellatrix plunged through the mirror, having passed through the portal, landing in a heap.

“Oomph...,” Harry grunted, smacking her jaw on Phaedra’s head, sending her glasses askew. ‘Damn glasses,’ she thought, rolling off the child’s body, adjusting them as she moved. ‘I wish I would’ve had time to put in my contacts!’ She had no time to think further on the matter as the possessed Phaedra leaped up, giving Harry a swift kick in the stomach. “Ahh...,” she groaned, curling into a protective ball, groping for her wand. Unfortunately, Bella had anticipated her actions.

“*Expelliarmus, Incarcerous!*” Bellatrix cackling voice exclaimed with evil delight. Harry felt the wand fly from her grip as she was bound and gagged. “We can’t have any of your mischief now can we?” Bellatrix leered, pushing her face into Harry’s. Harry simply glared back. “Say good-bye to your little niece, Harry. I have special plans for her, along with you and the rest of your traitorous clan.” Bella then twisted Phaedra’s face into an innocent smile, allowing her eyes to turn back into Phaedra’s terrified brown, before kissing Harry on the cheek. It was all over in an instant but Harry could feel the little girl’s horror. It was enough to send Bellatrix crowing with mad glee before she stood up, attention diverted to a soft rustling sound coming towards them.

This gave Harry a moment to take in her surroundings. Casting her eyes around, Harry became aware that she was lying on a hard cold surface, enshrouded in a mist. She could feel the chill becoming worse as realization hit her. ‘Oh shit, Dementors! I have got to stay calm and think of a way to get us out of here,’ she thought, when Bellatrix shrill voice pierced her ears once again.

“My friends, victory awaits! The child is mine. We shall have our revenge on the Blood Traitors and you will be free to feast on their souls. Then we can begin our plans to recruit those who would stand with us to rid the world of the vermin Muggles and those of impure blood! You shall be free to feast upon them at will!”

The coldness grew more intense as it closed in around them. The tattered black robes with skeletal limbs floated closer. In the back of her mind Harry could hear her father's voice, '*Lily, take Harry and run! He's here!*' Struggling to pull up her *Occlumency* shields Harry continued to listen to Bellatrix's insane ravings.

"I shall perform an ancient exorcism to rid the child's body of her soul while I anchor mine within it. Once done you may all vie for the discarded soul. The one who succeeds shall become my first lieutenant!"

'Bullshit, you insane bitch,' Harry raged internally, struggling futilely against her bonds. 'I'll see you in Hell before that happens.' Quickly focusing her mind on the task ahead, she formulated a simple plan to get free. Bella had made a critical mistake when she had bound Harry's limbs. Harry just prayed that she would be fast enough before Bella stopped her ravings and the Dementors closed in...

It took all of Severus inner strength to keep from allowing himself to panic. Harry had disappeared through the mirror with Phaedra, who was currently possessed by Bellatrix. Not even spying against the Dark Lord had been as terrifying. That had been a known risk and he had been able to understand his options. But this...this was something he had never anticipated. Phaedra possessed by an insane witch whom everyone had believed dead and Harry...his Harry...'Oh Merlin,' he thought, dark eyes staring at his reflection in that cursed mirror, 'Why doesn't she ever let her Slytherin side govern her actions? Now I may have lost them both!'

"Severus!" Tiberius voice snapped sharply, cutting off Severus' musing. "Albus has been speaking to you for the past two minutes. Snap out of it." He shook his nephew by the shoulders, "We must hurry!"

"Headmaster...Uncle..." Severus blinked, masking his emotions. "What must we do? Is there a means to return them from the mirror?"

"I believe so, Severus, but we must act swiftly. Yet we must not be without caution or more of us may be lost as well," Dumbledore answered. "However, first we must ascertain Remus' condition for I believe he may be the key to our success."

"Lupin, what has he to do with this?" Severus questioned, anger and confusion flashing briefly in his dark eyes. Dumbledore didn't respond immediately. He simply turned towards the hall. '*Blast you old man for talking in riddles,*' Severus thought.

"He is a lycanthrope." Dumbledore's voice called over his shoulder as he disappeared back into the hall, leaving Severus more confused than before. He looked towards his uncle, a shrewd look in his blue eyes, as if an idea had suddenly sprung into his mind.

"Uncle, will someone tell me what is going on? My wife and our niece are in danger and you are all..."

"Calm yourself, Severus, and think! Unless I am mistaken Albus has seen what we have all missed. The werewolf is a dark creature and has the ability to see things we cannot. Unless I miss my guess we overlooked something which Albus believes is instrumental." Tiberius blue eyes bored into Severus' as they each let down their mental barriers, quickly sifting through one another's memories. Pulling back sharply, they both drew the same conclusion.

"Mr. Chang saw it in the tea leaves," Severus whispered. His uncle nodded, turning back to stare at the mirror, the sound of Albus speaking drifting quietly from the hallway...

"How is he doing, Sirius?"

"He'll be alright, Albus. I don't know what potions Tiberius gave him but his wounds are almost healed. He vomited a couple of times," Sirius replied, gently stroking the werewolf's shaggy head.

"He was purging the silver poison that got into his bloodstream. The potion will work if given within a few minutes of the infection. It will also heal the wounds," Dumbledore explained. "He will be weak but should recover shortly." Turning his attention to the werewolf, Dumbledore continued, "Remus, I know you're not in the best of shape but it is imperative that both you and Sirius accompany me. Harry is in grave danger and both Harry and Phaedra's survival may depend on you."

Remus golden eyes flashed briefly, taking on a menacing glare. He stood up on shaky paws, still trembling, a low growl emanating from his throat, hackles on end; the wolf in him ready to defend a member of his pack.

"What's happened, Albus, I heard Snape yell at Harry to stop a few minutes ago. Is she alright?" The questions tumbled from his mouth as they followed Dumbledore back into the room with the mirror. "Where is my goddaughter?" Sirius looked around the room. Severus was standing stock still, Tiberius hand on his shoulder. The moonlight, combining with their pale complexions gave Sirius the brief impression of a statue, but of Harry and Phaedra there was no sign. "Snape, where is Harry?" he whispered, heart racing, the bile welling up in his stomach. Severus eyed him warily. Raising his hand, he pointed one long finger towards the mirror. Sirius stood frozen, eyes wide with shock, before his brain kicked in and he dived for Severus, fist drawing back to connect with his jaw. "You were supposed to protect her!" he yelled.

"You think I didn't try? Her bloody Gryffindor bravery made her grab onto Bellatrix as she passed into the mirror!" Severus cold voice intoned furiously, pointing his wand at Black.

"Enough!" Dumbledore's furious voice bellowed. With one flick of his wand both men stood frozen, glaring at each other. "You are both forgetting about the issue at hand. Harry is gone and it is up to us to get her back. She acted on instinct to try and stop Bellatrix from taking Phaedra. You two are delaying any chance we may have of rescuing them!" The two wizards lowered their eyes and Dumbledore released them with another wave of his wand. "Now that the two of you are through acting like school boys we can get on with our business." Pursing his lips he studied the three wizards and nodded towards the werewolf. "Remus, I believe that as a werewolf you may have the ability to pass through the mirror and find the way out." The werewolf looked at him, fire in his eyes, ears pricked at attention.

"Albus, my uncle and I have come to the conclusion that this has something to do with what Mr. Chang saw in the tea leaves a few weeks ago."

"You are correct, Severus. I believe his reading was more than accurate."

"What has his fortune telling got to do with anything? Harry is in trouble and you are talking about a bunch of blasted tea leaves!" Sirius growled impatiently.

"Sirius, remember what he told Harry and Phaedra? Did you not find the secret from the past as to whom this mirror belonged?" Sirius nodded thoughtfully and Dumbledore continued. "The mirror is a portal into another dimension. I believe that Remus will be able to see the way in."

"But, Albus, you said that once in it is impossible to get out unless you know the way," Tiberius commented.

"Indeed but Remus should be able to help with that. If I recall the rest of the reading it said that, '*The arm of the black serpent shall lead the way to the light*,' if I am not mistaken that would be referring to Severus."

"Even so, how do we go about this?" Tiberius questioned?

"Remus must enter the mirror and lead the way back."

"No way, Remus is my mate. I refuse to allow it!" Sirius gasped.

"Sirius, if we do not try we will loose Harry and Phaedra," Severus remarked, voice barely a whisper.

"Damn, we could loose Moony too." He looked down at the wolf, whose golden eyes studied him. Before anyone could stop him he walked over to the mirror. The moonlight was just beginning to cast its light onto the glass. Remus looked at it and growled. "Maybe I can see inside too if I transform," Sirius suggested. Immediately becoming the Grim he moved over to stand with the wolf. Studying the mirror for a moment, he cocked his head, before changing back.

"Did you see anything?" Dumbledore inquired.

"Only shadows, but I got the sense Moony can see everything clearly," Sirius replied, as the wolf tensed, growling.

"Then it is settled. Remus, I want you to go and help Harry and Phaedra. I shall put a tether on you that will be connected to Severus. He can pull you back if you can't see the entrance from the inside. Just pull on the rope and Severus will know it is time."

"What about the rest of us?"

"We will be on hand to either help Severus if need be or fight whatever else comes from within. I do not believe that Bellatrix will give up easily. Are we agreed?" Dumbledore asked looking around the room. Seeing the nods of agreement from everyone, he conjured a rope and attached it to the wolf, handing the other end to Severus. The young wizard positioned himself slightly back and to the right of the mirror, and then motioned for the werewolf to go ahead as Dumbledore spoke softly, "May Merlin be with them all..."

Harry could hear Bellatrix chanting in Latin. The Dementors were coming closer, their bones rattling. The chilling cold was making her feel numb but Harry continued to occlude. Concentrating, she worked on the spells to transform. The snake would be able to free her from the bonds, then she would have to act quickly. She could feel her body melting into the shadows on the floor as it elongated and her limbs disappeared. Empty ropes now lay where her hands and feet had been tied. Slithering silently along the floor Harry knew the Dementors would not detect her now. Being an Animagus had protected Sirius and kept him sane in Azkaban, keeping the hideous creatures away from him. Hopefully, it would help her now by granting enough time to get to Phaedra and find a way to escape. As the green serpent closed in on the possessed child, she flicked her forked tongue, tasting the air, becoming aware of another presence nearby. It was familiar, yet she could not place it, only that it meant no harm. As her mind was briefly distracted by the other presence, Bellatrix finished her chant, raising her arms and giving a wild shriek. Harry could see her body shivering and becoming distorted, as if looking into a fun house mirror. It seemed to be splitting in two before a loud rushing sound like the wind enveloped the witch. She gave another scream and then Harry could see two forms shoot out from

her. The larger of the two was black and oily looking with red sparks. The other, smaller one glowed brightly, just floating there for a moment before beginning to drift. Suddenly, the black one shot back into the child's form, while the other was propelled closer to the Dementors, who began to circle hungrily...

On Dumbledore's signal the large werewolf leaped into the mirror, senses on full alert. Raising his head he sniffed the air. It was cold and stale. He could feel the darkness within the enshrouding mists, but did not hesitate. He identified the scent he sought and plunged forward. The two youngest members of his pack were in danger. His amber eyes blazed with anger as he sped forward, ears pricked, tail in the air, his nose twitching furiously. As he drew closer, Remus was thankful for the first time in his life that he was a werewolf. The darker half of his mind was in control now, and he knew the wolf was angry. He was also on the hunt, feral instincts on full alert. He would protect his cubs at all costs. The mists parted briefly and he could hear the child's chant. His human half knew what was happening. It was an ancient spell, similar to what one would do when creating a Horcrux, among the darkest of magics. He was within sight of the shrouded forms now. Slowing down he dropped into a crouch, muscles taught, ready to spring, when his sharp eyes caught something moving on the floor. It slithered softly, sound shrouded by the shifting of the Dementors robes. The wolf was confused for a moment, before his human half recognized one of the animagus forms of his Harry cub. The serpent too, was on the hunt, heading straight for the one who held his other cub in thrall but paused briefly, forked tongue tasting the air, before moving forward once again. If anyone had been able to see him, they would have seen the wolf's lips curl into a smile, baring his fangs. Harry cub had sensed him there, but was unsure of who he was, confused for a moment. Remus let himself relax for a mere heartbeat, knowing that this would alert the serpent that he was no threat, and he watched her move on once more towards her quarry...

Harry's heart was beating a fast staccato. She had felt the wind and saw the two souls separate. 'I'm too late,' she thought. 'No, I have to try and save her! Phaedra's soul can be restored. I know there must be a way.' Even as these ideas flooded through her mind Harry heard a loud snarl and a flash of brown and gray fur flew over her, knocking Bellatrix down. Her animagus sense then realized the other presence

she had felt was none other than Remus. She had no time to dwell on it though. Harry could see the Dementors closing in. She knew she had to do something fast before the creatures devoured the bright light that was Phaedra's soul while Remus had Bellatrix on the floor.

"Stop him!" Bellatrix screamed while the werewolf kept her body pinned to the floor. "Take the werewolf. He will not hurt the child's body while her soul is still alive. Once he is taken care of you may have the child's soul. Whoever devours her first shall be rewarded, and then you may have the Blood Traitor's wife and the rest!" Bellatrix glared into the golden eyes with a smirk, she hadn't realized that Harry was free. "Foolish creature, you can't hurt the little one's body and you know it. It will be your entire downfall," she hissed angrily, as the cold of the Dementors enveloped them.

Remus knew he had to get out of there now. He let out an angry howl. Grasping his powerful jaws on the rope he pulled backwards, to alert those waiting on the other side that he needed to come back. Shifting his weight he clenched onto the child's robes. He would have to leave Harry behind or all would be lost. 'May Merlin protect her and Phaedra's soul,' he whined as he felt them being pulled back from the mirror.

The Dementors were everywhere, some following Remus as he was dragged forwards, Phaedra's body in tow. Others were surrounding Phaedra's golden light, when the belly of the serpent felt something long and cylindrical on the floor beneath her belly. "My wand!" she hissed joyfully. Harry transformed in the blink of an eye, shuddering as she felt the Dementors swooping towards her. Gathering her thoughts she thought of her wedding night.

"*Expecto Patronum!*" Her voice rang out reverberating through the darkness. A shot of silver sprung from her wand, startling her with a new form. She had expected the stag but in its place was now a huge bat. "Severus is never going to let me live this down," she chuckled, shaking her head in disbelief, the Dementors scattering in all directions. Harry had no time to consider her new Patronus further. Phaedra's soul was drifting upwards and she had to retrieve it quickly. Instinctively she pointed her wand and conjured a glass bubble around the floating light. Transforming once again, phoenix song

reverberating all around as she flew to retrieve it, grasping the bubble in her talons. However, Harry wasn't sure where to go. She could see no way out and the Dementors were beginning to return. With a shrill cry, she turned in what she hoped was the direction that she had seen Remus and Bellatrix disappearing into the darkness. 'Sweet Merlin, let this be the way out,' she mused, as the cold grew closer...

"What the bloody hell is taking so long?" Sirius questioned, pacing the length of the room.

"Black, will you stop the infernal pacing and stand ready?" Severus snapped, exasperated, secretly hoping the wolf would hurry. "Now get over here and back me up! We have no idea what will happen when they return."

"Listen, Snape, you may have a heart of stone but I don't. My goddaughter and life mate are in that damn mirror along with your niece and I can't stand not being able to help. I didn't see you going in after them!"

"If you recall Albus sent Lupin in because he felt he was better equipped to handle the situation. I wanted to go. Harry is my wife, mutt, no matter whether you like the idea or not! Do you really believe that I wouldn't be willing to die for her? Or don't you take your vows of protection seriously?" Snape seethed through clenched teeth fighting the urge to hex the animagus.

"Are you calling me a coward? I took that vow and I meant every word, even to making sure your sorry ass is protected to keep my goddaughter happy, Snivellus," Sirius bellowed, aiming his wand.

"Stop this insanity now!" Dumbledore's voice reverberated through out the room. "Sirius, control your temper. You know that Severus loves Harry and Phaedra. I also know that while he would never admit it openly he considers Lupin a friend or he would never have allowed him into his home. I suspect the same goes for you. I thought the two of you had settled your differences."

"I'm sorry, Albus, I'm just worried about them all." Sirius cheeks flushed with shame. "You too, Severus, I should never have used that

disgusting nick name. I just...well..." His shoulders slumped in defeat. "Old habits die hard."

"Then you would do well to bury that habit, Sirius, since my nephew may not be so forgiving next time. He is as worried as you about them. It is taking all of his inner strength for him to maintain control." Tiberius spoke from where he was guarding the door.

"I..." Sirius began

"Black, take your position," Severus interrupted, before he could finish. "The mirror is changing. Something is happening within its confines and I presume it is not good!"

Gasping in shock at the looking glass before them, Sirius turned and took up his position opposite Snape. The mirror was shimmering with red and green sparks, the glass becoming distorted with swirls of silver and black. All eyes widened as they watched it begin to bulge outwards and then recede back into itself. They could only guess at what was happening inside. Severus palms were sweating with fear for his loved ones. He tightened his grip on both his wand and the rope. The moonlight was pouring in through the narrow window, reflecting fully onto the glass. In the space of a heartbeat all the hairs on the back of the three men's necks stood on end, the air was rent with the howl of a wolf, the eerie sound somehow escaping from within the mirror. The rope in Severus hand was pulled taught, standing stiffly in front of him, disappearing into the glass. Severus reacted immediately and began to pull on the rope with all his strength. It was like fighting a tug of war and he had to dig in his heels.

"Black, grab hold of the rope. I can't hold it alone," Severus screamed as small cracks started to form in the glass.

Sirius leaped to his aid, putting extra weight behind him while the other two wizards stood with wands at the ready. The cracks grew wider as they pulled, making a sound like cracking ice. Forcing themselves backwards, muscles straining, the two men gave one sharp tug as the glass shattered, sending a maelstrom of violent wind and cold into the room. As it did so, two figures emerged, followed by the dark shadows of the Dementors. Severus and Sirius were thrown to the floor. Tiberius grabbed onto the door jam and Albus braced

himself up against the wall. The two younger wizards reacted instantly, Severus jumping to his feet, wand drawn. Sirius quickly transformed against the onslaught of the negative feelings imbibed by the Dementors. Albus Patronus lit up the room, as did those of the other two wizards, silver animals swooping in all directions. The two canines stood guard over the small child. Cackling laughter was erupting from her distorted face, eyes flashing red with fury and triumph. No one had to say anything to know it was Bellatrix. Severus immediately hit her with a stunning spell, dark eyes scanning the room for his wife. His heart sunk into his stomach, his face etched with horror, as the realization that Harry had not come back with the others struck him. She was still lost within the mirror...

Chapter 15

THE DESTINY OF SOULS

Harry was flying blind. There was nothing but darkness and the gray swirling mists. Suddenly, buffeted by an icy whirlwind, she had all she could do to hold onto the Orb containing Phaedra's soul. Caught by a rapid gust of the wind, wings fully expanded to keep aloft, Harry spun upside down towards the floor. Twisting her body to try and regain control, the Orb pressed into the silky feathers of her stomach, she hit the cold stone, rolling over to land with the Orb beneath her, still intact. Transforming back to her human self she quickly put the Orb into her robe pocket. The Dementors rushed around her, their tattered robes flapping in the wind like grotesque scarecrows. Beginning to panic, Harry's mind flashed through her options. It had become impossible to fly because of the wind. The Dementors were closing in on them and she had no clue how large this Limbo like area was. She briefly considered transforming into her winged serpent, but was unsure where the ceiling was, if there even was one. If she transformed into the snake she had no way to carry the Orb, except in her mouth, and feared she would either choke, or worse, swallow it. As if on cue one of the Dementors swept in. One skeletal hand was reaching towards her, the other lowering its hood, coming in for the kill. Occluding her mind, Harry pulled her wand.

"Expecto Patronum," she gasped. Instantly, her new Patronus leapt forward, the giant bat sweeping the creatures back. Harry had no choice but to run, seeking a way out from the mirror. She continued to cast her Patronus as she ran, keeping the horrid creatures at bay, but knew it would only be a matter of time. She was growing exhausted and another transformation would only worsen the situation. She needed to conserve as much magical energy as possible, having already expended a large amount with the rapid succession of transformations and Patronus spells. As she ran, Harry wondered if she did transform again if she could just disappear in a flash of flames to escape the mirror, reappearing back inside the castle. Fawkes did it all the time but he was an actual Phoenix, not an Animagus, and Dumbledore had once told her this was impossible. However, he was occasionally wrong about such things. After all, the last multiple animagus had been Merlin, so maybe it would work. 'I'll

try it if nothing else works as a last resort,' she thought. 'It can't be much different than apparition. Maybe Moony left a clue or something. Hell, I'm not even sure if he got out. The Dementors were everywhere and Bellatrix was screaming for them to suck out his soul,' her mind sobbed in desperation. 'Oh Sev...Help me please...I don't know what to do...

As Severus stared at the mirror his horror quickly turned into anger. Lupin had only partially succeeded in his mission. Harry would not be lost to him. He refused to even entertain the though that she had not survived. He was determined to find her and then deal with ridding his niece of her possession by Bellatrix. Glancing quickly back at the still form of the witch he flicked his wand, releasing the rope from the werewolf. With a circular motion he then secured one end of the rope onto the old iron door handle while snaking the other around his waist.

"Albus," he shouted over the rushing wind, "I am going to get my wife!" He stepped deftly through the broken glass and into the maelstrom before anyone could utter a denial. The first thing he felt was the cold, and knew there were still Dementors nearby. He also realized a thick gray mist prevented him from seeing anything other than grotesque images formed by the wind as it whistled around him. "Lumos," he muttered. The dim light barely helped to dispel the darkness in front of him as he moved forward, his senses on alert. He only hoped he would be in time. Even Harry, despite her animagus forms, could not hold out forever against the Dementors, especially in this foul place, without food and water...

Harry was exhausted; tears came unbidden from her eyes. She didn't know how long ago she had started to cry and she could feel the Dementors coming closer each time. Stopping to catch her breath, she sat down on the cold floor, pulling her bathrobe tight around her in an attempt to keep the cold at bay. 'There is no way out,' she mused, unable to stop a sob from escaping from her lips. 'Oh, Phaedra, I am so sorry,' she thought, clutching the Orb closer in her pocket. 'I failed you.' Her mind then drifted to thoughts of her husband. 'Sev, I love you and now you will be left all alone again. Please don't go back to being that cold and bitter person you once were. I should've listened to you and thought before trying to grab onto Bella.' Harry absently toyed with her wedding ring, letting down her

empathic shields. ‘Maybe, Sev will be able to feel how much I am going to miss him if I try and touch his soul before mine is lost to the darkness...’

Severus moved silently through the mists, the wind finally slowing, as he made his way forward. The cold was growing more intense. The light from his wand began to fade as a cloaked figure erupted from the fog, claw like hands reaching towards him, fetid breath creating a nauseating stench in the air around him.

“*Expecto Patronum!*” he shouted. A silvery form shot from his wand, but it was no longer the doe from his youth, or the small teddy bear that had appeared when he had begun to think of Dumbledore as his parent figure and mentor. But this new Patronus did not shock him, for it was a winged snake, a smaller version of Harry’s winged serpent. As the realization of its significance hit him, his wedding ring began to glow and burn on his finger, its magic alerting him to Harry’s distress. He plunged forward wondering if the other Protectors could feel it as well, or if the magic from the mirror would interfere with the spells. Unexpectedly, a feeling of love and regret swept over him, causing him to pause abruptly in his search. Harry had let down her empathic barrier and was reaching out towards him! Latching onto the feelings he started running. He could sense a feeling of desperation. His keen sense of hearing picking up the faint sound of crying as the mists grew colder. Throwing all his power into a strong *Lumos*, he could see a patch of blackness up ahead, feelings of doom engulfing him...

Once Severus had disappeared into the mirror Dumbledore and Tiberius made short work of the Dementors. Sirius transformed back from his animagus form and looked around while Remus remained beside the unconscious form of the possessed child. The blowing winds had diminished following the initial onslaught, the broken mirror resembling a black hole. Nothing came out. The rope securing Severus stretched into the nothingness beyond.

“So now what?” Sirius ventured, looking from Dumbledore to Tiberius.
“Should one of us go in after them?”

"No, Sirius, I believe that it would be unwise to do so. We have no idea if there is going to be another group of Dementors or if anything else may come from within." Dumbledore shook his head sadly. "We can only wait."

"Why don't we wake up Bella and ask her?"

"I think we should wait," Tiberius remarked. "She may be able to call for reinforcements for which we are unprepared. My nephew is well versed in the Dark Arts and will be able to pull on the rope if he is in trouble."

"I can't just sit here and do nothing! My goddaughter and Severus are both in there. Severus and I may have our differences but I hold my oath to them both sacred."

"We understand that, Sirius, and so do they. However, Harry and Severus would not want you to put yourself to any unnecessary risk. If nothing happens within the next fifteen minutes then we will consider either awakening Bellatrix or allowing you to enter the mirror," Dumbledore told him gravely.

"So we just have to sit here and do nothing?"

"No, we should make sure Bellatrix is bound and unable to speak, then you and Lupin should get ready to pull on the rope should my nephew need it. In the meantime, Albus and I will try and work out a way to get Bellatrix out of Phaedra's body. We need to be certain she is no longer in control while we watch for any signs of trouble from within that wretched mirror," Tiberius ground out. He was unable to completely hide the anger and worry in his voice despite the blank mask on his features.

Sirius looked back and forth between the two older wizards. Seeing Dumbledore's nod of agreement he moved back towards where Remus lay guarding Bellatrix. Sirius was not happy and swore under his breath, but would do as they instructed for the time being. 'Oh, Harry, I hope Severus can find you and you come home safely,' he reflected morosely. He completed the bonds to secure Bellatrix while Albus and Tiberius spoke in hushed voices. Then he sat down to wait

beside the still slack rope, staring into the mirror's black void. He was brooding to himself when all of a sudden he felt the ring on his finger begin to tingle emitting a burning sensation.

Moony whined as Sirius stood abruptly, immediately sensing that something was wrong with his mate. Sirius was staring at his ring, which was emitting a soft glow. The werewolf had removed his ring prior to his transformation, but the scent of his lover's fear and the tightening of his muscles alerted the werewolf that Harry and Severus were in trouble...

Harry was sobbing, the Dementors were closing in. She kept trying in vain to find the strength to cast one last Patronus but it was useless. She could hear her mother's screams, the Dursley's calling her a freak, and worst of all Voldemort's mocking laughter. She was frozen and just wanted it to end. She couldn't move. A skeletal hand reached out and grabbed her shoulder, while the other lowered its hood, gaping maw ready to feed on her soul. Somewhere in the back of her mind she thought she heard a familiar voice ring out. But no...It couldn't be. He was safe in the castle. A final tear slid down her cheek as she succumbed to the blackness...

"*Expecto Patronum!*" Severus shouted. His Patronus shot forward in a brilliant flash of silver before diving into the center of the Dementors. He shouted the spell a second time as they scattered, his long legs carrying him faster than ever before. Harry lay on the floor in front of him, eyes closed, shallow breaths coming from her parted lips. "Merlin... No... Please let her be all right...I can't lose her to those foul creatures," he gasped. Reaching his long arm forward he pulled her to him, kneeling beside her still form. "Harry," he called, shaking her shoulders. "Harry wake up! We haven't got much time! Do you hear me Harry?" he called desperately. "Snap out of it Potter! We have to get out of here NOW!" he shouted, trying another tactic to get her to respond. "Look at me when I am speaking to you, Potter!" he snarled, using his most lethal Professor's voice, hoping to get her to respond, as he held her ice cold body close to his chest.

Harry was freezing, and thought she could hear someone yelling something through the black haze surrounding her mind. She was dreaming she was in her Occlumency lesson and Professor Snape

was yelling at her while she was down on the floor. She could smell cinnamon and cloves, and heard an odd thumping sound. Something was wrapped around her and she felt safe as the warmth came back into her limbs. Forcing her mind up through the void she realized she was listening to a heartbeat. Her mind suddenly registered that familiar smell of cinnamon and cloves as belonging to Severus. Not daring to believe her senses, she slowly cracked open her eyes, only to find herself facing a heavy black robe. Shifting her head she found herself looking into a pair of familiar obsidian eyes.

"I am looking at you, Professor." She smiled weakly, reaching up to touch the rough stubble on his cheek. It was wet.

"Harry? Thank Merlin, I thought I was too late."

"I thought I had lost you too, Sev," Harry replied, soaking up the warmth from his arms.

"Harry, we have to get out of here. The Dementors will be back. Are you strong enough to walk?"

"I think so, but how do we get out? I couldn't find anyway back," she said, as he assisted her onto her feet.

"The same way Lupin did. I have a rope secured to my waist. We simply pull on it to alert the others. They will respond to my signal and lead us towards the exit."

"Oh, too bad I didn't think of that before I grabbed onto Bellatrix."

"Indeed," he agreed. A familiar sneer graced his lips before he gave the rope a tug...

Sirius ring was still tingling when he grabbed onto the rope, which still remained slack. He kept looking from the rope to his ring and then back to the mirror when the rope did not move. He wanted to plunge into the mirror but Dumbledore had moved to block his path.

"Sirius, do not be hasty. If Severus needs your help he will let you know. Let me know if there is any change from your ring, as I believe it has alerted you to some kind of danger?"

"It is warm and tingling and before it was glowing."

"As I suspected. Has it changed any since you first felt it?"

"At first I thought it would burn my finger off, but now it is just as I said, warm and tingling."

"Then let us see what happens. I think what ever is happening our Potions Master has it under control."

"But what if..." Sirius began to argue when he was interrupted by a pull on the rope.

"There, you see, Severus has called for you to guide the way out."

Sirius simply nodded, and began to pull on the rope, Moony standing ready to assist him, but there was no need. It seemed that Snape merely needed a guide. At least he hoped it was Snape and not something else...

Severus held tightly to Harry's arm as he allowed the pull of the rope to lead them towards the opening of the mirror. His wand was raised high in his other hand, its meager light barely helping to dispel the darkness. Harry was shivering with the cold so he cast a brief warming charm and she smiled wanly. Dark shadows followed through the twisting gray mists, and he could feel the presence of the Dementors. The strain was evident on his wife's pale features as she tried to maintain her empathic blocks to fight the overpowering feelings the horrid creatures imbued.

"Harry, do you know how many Dementors are here with us?" he whispered.

"I'm not sure. Maybe five or six," she replied, trying to sense the creatures.

"Are you up to casting a Patronus should they attack again?"

"Yes, now that I have you near me."

"Stay alert then. I think they are grouping. I suspect they will try and attack as we near the exit."

"Why do you suppose they haven't left the mirror?" Harry questioned.

"I am uncertain. Perhaps they were told to stay until called for. Either that, or they are as trapped as we are without Bellatrix." He raised his brow thoughtfully.

"Sev, about Bellatrix, she did..." Harry began to explain about the spell, only to be interrupted by the group of Dementors swooping in. She pointed her wand just as Severus dropped her arm and did the same.

"*Expecto Patronum!*" they shouted in unison. The bright silver images of a large bat and a winged serpent swooped through the mists, scattering the Dementors. Severus gave a mighty tug on the rope they needed to get out quickly. He grabbed Harry as he was jolted forwards. She was hanging onto his robes when the rope attached to Severus' waist tightened with violent tug. Caught off guard Severus was yanked forward, loosing his grip on Harry as he was jerked into the mists and disappeared.

"Severus!" she called. In a near panic Harry groped around the floor searching for him unsuccessfully. "Lumos," she lit her wand. There was no sign of her husband. She was alone and she could sense the Dementors beginning to return...

Severus fell into the open room, landing at Dumbledore's feet. The old man kneeled down making certain he was unharmed as he glanced around looking for Harry.

"Snape, where's my goddaughter?" Sirius questioned as Dumbledore ran his wand over the younger man, checking for any injuries.

"Harry?" Severus' head spun around only to face the black void where the mirrored glass had once been. "Shit! When you pulled me through the mirror we became separated. She's still in there with a group of Dementors. Spinning his body around, Severus rolled back towards the mirror, throwing his upper body inside, while his legs remained in the room. He spotted the dim light from her wand about

six feet to his left. "Harry, follow my voice," he yelled as the chill from the Dementors reached him.

"Sev, where are you? I can't see you through the dark and the mists."

"I'm over here," he responded. He still was holding his wand and lit it to help guide her to him. He could see her drawing closer, when a Dementor swooped down towards her lighted wand. He shouted another Patronus and stretched forwards, able to discern Harry on the floor in the glow from the Patronus. Grabbing her robe with one hand he pulled and flung himself backwards out of the mirror. He landed in a heap, Harry on top of him.

"Harry!" Sirius joyful voice greeted her ears as he pulled her up and hugged her. "I was terrified we had lost you."

"I'm fine, Sirius. Just a bit shaken up from the Demen..."

"Look out," Tiberius yelled, pulling his nephew to his feet. The Dementors had followed them from the mirror.

The room was immediately filled with silver animals. Sirius had been caught off guard and was unable to transform as one of the creatures swooped down at him. Moony jumped forwards with a howl as Dumbledore's silver phoenix intercepted the creature. In the meantime Tiberius sent a blasting hex combined with a banishing charm towards the mirror, sending it into oblivion. Severus turned towards Phaedra, and gasped. All heads turned in the child's direction.

"NO!" Severus yelled, as a silver thestral shot from Tiberius wand towards the Dementor. However, it was too late. The creature had already locked his mouth onto the child, and she lay limp and staring. The Dementor then turned as Severus and Dumbledore both sent their Patronus' to assist the one cast by Tiberius, and it fled through the window.

Everyone gathered around the body of the little girl except Harry. She stood watching as her husband and his uncle cradled the limp body. Severus jaw was set, the pain of loss evident in his dark eyes. Sirius transformed and went over to see if there was anything he could do.

Looking up at his goddaughter he shook his head negatively, expecting to see her upset and crying. He was shocked to discover she was simply looking on without any sign of being upset.

"Severus, we need to move her back downstairs," Dumbledore said, placing a gentle hand on his shoulder.

"No," he whispered. "I cannot allow her to die like this." He stood up with Tiberius and pointed his wand towards Phaedra. "Avada..."

"*Expelliarmus,*" Harry interrupted the curse, Severus' wand flying neatly into her hand. "I can't allow you to do that."

"Harry, you can't be serious! If we leave her she will just waste away. There is no chance of separating her soul from Bellatrix now. The Dementor would have taken them both!" Severus ground out, trying to keep his temper in check.

"Severus is right, Harry, it would be unfair to Phaedra," Sirius told her. "If you want you can go downstairs and wait. Let Severus do what needs to be done."

"Maybe under ordinary circumstances I would, but there is something none of you know. It was only Bella's soul that the Dementor took."

"Child, what are you saying?" Dumbledore asked, blue eyes alert with interest.

"When Moony and I were in the mirror, Bellatrix did some kind of ancient magic and separated her soul from Phaedra. Moony was there but he didn't get to see what happened when Phaedra's soul was set adrift. You pulled him back out with Bellatrix. In any event he wouldn't be able to tell you anything. Well maybe he could tell Sirius in his dog form, but only about the separation."

"Harry, for Merlin's sake, what are you trying to tell us?" Tiberius inquired, unable to keep the agitation from his voice.

"Well, Bellatrix separated the souls and set Phaedra's adrift for the Dementors to catch, but I beat them to it. I conjured an orb to hold it

in and caught it in true seeker fashion." She grinned, reaching into her pocket and pulling out the glowing orb.

"You mean to tell us you've had it this whole time?" Severus' asked, unable to hide his shock. "Why didn't you tell me?"

"I started to when we were trying to get out of the mirror. That's when the Dementors came." She shrugged. "Now we just have to put it back where it belongs."

"Albus, is this possible? Can we return Phaedra's soul to her body?"

"I am uncertain, Severus, but am open to suggestions."

"We need to go and study some of the ancient tomes. There may be an answer there," Tiberius suggested. "In the meantime we need to keep them both safe."

"Uh...guys. I think I have an idea that might work."

"What is it, Harry?"

"I don't know if it will work, but I got the idea watching the Dementors." She shifted uneasily, hoping they wouldn't think her idea absurd.

"Tell us, Harry. You've always had good instincts," Dumbledore encouraged.

"It's just that Dementors suck out souls through a person's mouth. I read somewhere that the ancient Egyptians did something called the Opening of the Mouth Ceremony to their dead so that the soul could reenter the body from the afterlife." She took a deep breath. "Can't we just put it back in through her mouth?"

The wizards all looked uncertainly from one to the other, before Tiberius spoke.

"You are correct about the ancient Egyptians, Harry, but I don't see how such a thing could work."

"But you don't know that it won't. I can still capture her soul again if it starts to drift off. I think it is worth a try. It could take months to find another way and I don't think Phaedra can last too long like this."

"Severus, as the head of the family I am willing to let Harry try. What are your thoughts on this?"

"Uncle, Albus has always been right about Harry's instincts. I believe we should let her try." He looked at Harry, hope in his dark eyes.

"Very well, then. Harry go ahead and try. Albus and I will stand by to create another Orb if it is needed," Tiberius informed her.

"Sev, will you hold her head up and lean it back to keep her mouth open for me?" He tilted his head in understanding and cradled Phaedra's head in his lap, positioning her as Harry desired. She then moved over to kneel beside them on the floor and studied the Orb for a moment. She then placed it up against Phaedra's open jaw and muttered a spell dispelling the lower half of the Orb. The golden mist swirled around for a moment and then began to slowly snake its way into the child's body through her parted lips. Once it was gone, Harry banished the rest of the Orb and they all waited with bated breath.

"Phaedra, come on baby. It's time to wake up. You've had us all very worried." Severus prodded gently. "Come on, little one, you need to wake up." He told the still child, running his hands through her hair.

"Uncle, Sev?" Phaedra twitched as her eyes focused on her Uncle.

"YES!" Sirius hollered ecstatically, fisting his hand into the air. "You did it, Harry. It worked! Phaedra's awake and my cousin got what was coming to her."

"Well done, Harry." Dumbledore's blue eyes twinkled.

"What is going on?" Phaedra asked, looking around the room. "Why are we in this old room?" The adults just laughed. "Humph, nobody ever tells me anything," Phaedra pouted.

"Can you remember anything, Child?" Dumbledore inquired softly.

"I had a bad dream. How did I get here? Did I walk in my sleep or something?"

"Something like that," Severus answered giving her a hug. "But you're safe now and that is all that matters."

"I think we should all be getting to bed. It has been a long night," Tiberius remarked, taking Phaedra in his arms to allow Severus to stand.

"But I just woke up! I don't want to go to bed."

"I think a nice cup of hot cocoa will help you go back to sleep and then tomorrow maybe we can go and visit Fred and George," Harry smiled, a happy tear running down her cheek.

"Aunt Harry, you're crying. Is something the matter?"

"No, Phaedra, everything's fine. I am just happy that you're safe now. How about we all tuck you back into bed with that cocoa?"

"If I go back to sleep can we go and see Mr. Fred and George when I wake up? You said we could."

"Spoken like a true Slytherin," Harry laughed. "Yes, Phaedra, we will go and see them."

"If you're a good girl, I will personally buy you a Puffskein from there shop," Severus declared, as they all trooped from the room. Dobby met them on the lower floor.

"Masters Snape, Dobby and Winky has cleaned up in Miss Phaedra's room," he said, green eyes sad. We's wanted to know if Winky should stay with Miss Phaedra."

"That won't be necessary, Dobby. I will stay with my niece for the remainder of the night. However, Winky will now be Phaedra's personal elf."

"What about Hazel?" Phaedra demanded.

"Phaedra, Hazel was old and she passed away tonight," Harry explained. She felt the half truth would be better than trying to explain what really happened.

"She went away to be with Mummy?"

"Yes, Child, but that doesn't mean she left you. You will see her again someday along with your parents."

"What if you all go away too?"

"Phaedra, none of us are going away for a long, long time. By then you will be a grandmother," Severus comforted her fears.

"I'm going to Miss Hazel." She buried her head in Tiberius robes and started to cry.

"Me too," Harry quietly agreed. "I think you will like Winky though. She is a young elf and you will be together a long time."

"Will she play with me?"

"I bet she will."

"Oh yes, Miss Phaedra. Winky is a good elf. She's likes to play with children." Dobby piped up as he followed the group into Phaedra's room.

"Dobby if you would get the hot chocolate and inform Winky and the rest of the elves of her new duties, you can then retire for the night," Tiberius instructed.

"Right away, Master Tiberius, Dobby will see that yous get the chocolate and will tell Winky and the other elves right away." Snapping his fingers he popped from the room.

Tiberius settled Phaedra back into bed as a tray with five cups appeared. Remus stretched out by the fire with a sigh and Sirius sat beside him absently stroking his soft fur. They all talked quietly among themselves while they drank their cocoa and Tiberius subtly charmed Phaedra back to sleep. Once she was resting peacefully,

Tiberius charmed one of the chairs into a bed for himself. Sirius took Moony back to their rooms since the moon would soon set. He then set up a silencing spell so that no one would hear his painful ordeal. Albus elected to stay the rest of the night and Severus and Harry showed him to his room before retiring themselves.

"I need a shower. I'm filthy from tonight's adventures," Harry stated, heading towards the bathroom. Stripping off her clothes she threw them in the bin and stepped into the steamy water. She stood there, eyes closed, letting the relaxing stream melt the night's aches from her tired muscles. She didn't hear Severus come into the bathroom and was startled by a soft touch on her shoulder. Snapping open her eyes, she found Severus studying her with amusement.

"If you have no objections I thought I would join you." He pursed his lips in amusement at her blush. In the short time they had been married they had yet to bathe together and the time had seemed right.

"Depends what you have in mind." She grinned back at him.

"What ever you would like my dear," his velvety baritone whispered into her ear.

"In that case..." She pulled him down to meet his lips, their tongues meeting one another. They stayed locked that way for a few minutes, the warm water engulfing their entwined limbs.

"I love you, Harry. I may not say it often but I do." He slowly slid his hands over her wet buttocks and she shivered with pleasure at his touch.

"I love you too, Severus," she whispered into his chest, reaching down to explore his hardening member. "By the way, I noticed your Patronus has changed."

"As did yours, I find it amusing that you still picture me as the bat from the dungeons." He teased.

"Just trying to maintain your reputation," she responded, nipping his chest.

He tilted her chin up with his finger, leaning down to meet her lips again while fondling her breasts. He released her slowly and reached for the soap. Lathering his hands he ran them over her soft skin, nibbling her ear lobe as he did so. Harry followed suit and they teased and kissed one another, taking pleasure in one another's arousal. Severus moaned as Harry tweaked his nipples and began kissing her way down his chest to his stomach, exploring him with her mouth. He wondered idly how far she would go, when she took him into her mouth. Leaning up against the wall he ran his hands through her wet hair and down her back as she slowly worked her tongue over his shaft. He reveled in her shy ministrations, knowing she was unsure about taking him in all the way. However, he had other ideas. He wanted to be inside her with the warmth of the water and the closeness such intimacy would imbue. Reaching down he gently nudged her away. She looked up in confusion at first, and he pulled her up to him for another long kiss as he guided her up against the wall. Carefully reaching around her he picked her up.

"Put your legs around me," he whispered, and a light of understanding made her green eyes dance.

Harry locked her legs around his waist, as he carefully helped her guide him to her entrance. He penetrated the soft folds slowly, allowing her time to adjust, before he took her tongue into his mouth once again, and began to thrust. He moved slowly at first, letting the water spill over them, allowing her need to grow in intensity. Gradually she began to try and match his movements with her own. She arched her back into the wall as he sped up, his own need growing urgent, her legs tight about him. Harry moaned softly as he penetrated harder each time, pressing herself into him, both frantic for release. She sobbed with pleasure as her taught muscles shuddered with an intense orgasm, Severus moaning her name with his own release at the same time.

Harry had no idea how long they stayed that way before she unwound herself from her husband's body and he gently set her down and turned off the water. He pulled two towels from the rack and wrapped one around her and the other about his waist. Picking her up he carried her to their bed. Flicking his wand he cast a drying spell and put on their night clothes. Climbing into bed, he nestled her

comfortably in his arms, kissing her forehead. Neither spoke, they didn't have to. They just looked into one another's eyes, the love they had for one another reflected there as they slowly drifted off to sleep.

Neither knew that while they slumbered peacefully enfolded in each other's arms the result from their intense love making was starting to make itself present inside of Harry. It would be several weeks before they learned that next spring the soul of a new Snape would make its entrance into the magical world...

Epilogue

Portraits of Life

The old woman walked slowly back through the castle gates, a small smile playing upon her lips, green eyes sparkling. ‘Everything will be all right now,’ she mused. ‘I have fulfilled my final destiny.’ Pulling open the great doors, she climbed the stairs to her office. The stone gargoyles slid aside and she winked at them. Her password, lightning bolt, was unnecessary. The stone monoliths knew that she was the Headmistress. Sighing, she stepped from the moving stairs into the large circular room. Ignoring the chair behind the desk, she sank down into one of the blue overstuffed chairs flanking the fireplace, settling her tired legs on the matching ottoman. The portraits of the previous Headmasters and mistresses shuffled within their frames.

“Ahem,” Dumbledore’s portrait cleared his voice. “I take it that everything went well?”

“You know it did, Old Man, otherwise I wouldn’t be sitting here now,” she chuckled, pointing her wand at the magically enlarged scar on her forehead. “I remember the day this scar shrank to a very thin white mark. The day Voldemort was gone for good and I was free at last.” Memories drifted through her mind of those long ago events. “So many lost...,” she mumbled.

“All wars have their losses, Harry. You know that. You shouldn’t dwell on those who were lost,” Dumbledore admonished. “Think instead of all those whose lives were spared. You and Severus were instrumental in the saving of our world. It is a debt which can never be repaid. Even after the wars were finally over, you two continued to strive for a better life for wizard kind.”

“We had lots of help, Albus, you know that.”

“You were never alone, Harry. Your friends and family have always been your greatest asset. Think of all the good times, rather than dwell on those that gave you pain.”

“I remember them all, both good and bad.” Harry looked up at Dumbledore, her green eyes shadowed. “In fact, I’m surprised you haven’t mentioned my use of the time turner.”

“Why? You knew I was aware you had gone back in time to see your teenaged self prior to the battle with Voldemort. You needed to believe in yourself. Who could have been better to convince your youthful self than your own older personage?”

“Well, I’m just glad it worked. Of course, I never appreciated my expression than when I realized who I had been talking to.” She grinned. “I wonder how I would have reacted if I had told myself that I was going to spend the rest of my life as Severus’ wife?”

“Hmm...I daresay you would have argued the point. You were only just getting to know him.”

“I really miss him, you know? “ Harry glanced up to the wall where Severus’ portrait was hanging only to find it empty. “Where is he?” she queried. “I expected him to be here.” Harry frowned looking at the empty frame.

“I believe he went to his portrait in St. Mungo’s with Dilly. They are discussing the potion and treatment for a child with the same heart condition that little Olivia succumbed to.”

“Olivia...” she sighed. “He tried so hard to save her. If only she had hung on for another six months. I still blame myself...” her voice trailed off.

“Harry, it wasn’t your fault. You were well into your forties when she came along. It was just a rare congenital defect that no one could have anticipated.”

“But if I had taken better care of myself...”

“No, Harry, it would not have mattered in the least. Just be thankful for the happiness you gave her in her short life,” Dumbledore remarked sadly. “Your husband and family rallied around you during your darkest hours.”

“She died in my arms, you know?”

“Severus told me. It was one of the few times I wished I were actually still here. He was in so much grief. You were beside yourself and he didn’t know what to do. He was also grieving and he feared he would lose you too.”

“He didn’t though. People always think I am the strong one because I am so powerful, but it isn’t true. He stayed by me when I closed myself off from everyone and helped our other two children who were still teenagers. Our eldest had gone off on his own by then, but he came to help too.”

“Yes, he may have looked the most like his father, but he has his mother’s heart. I believe he was Olivia’s godfather as well as her eldest brother?”

“Yeah,” Harry smiled, “He was so excited when he found out we wanted him to be his baby sister’s godfather. After all, he was old enough to be a father himself, being twenty two. I think that Olivia’s death is what made him finally settle down and become a healer.”

“I do not doubt it. I know it was always a sore point with Severus that young Severin was uncertain what he wanted to truly study when he finished Hogwarts. I think he wanted him to follow in his footsteps and study towards his Mastery in Potions. He has the talent.”

“He does, but Severus didn’t want to push him towards it. He wanted him to find what would make him happy. It was something we agreed on when each of the children were born.”

“Remember when you first realized you were pregnant with him? If memory serves me it was not long after the problems we had with that mirror Phaedra brought home.”

“Yeah, he was conceived the night we defeated Bellatrix,” Harry laughed, a blush creeping up her wrinkled cheeks. “I had wanted to tell Sev with a quiet dinner, but Remus and his blasted werewolf nose realized it before I could.”

“I don’t think you ever really went into what happened.”

“Oh, Merlin, it was hilarious. My cycle was late and I bought one of those Muggle pregnancy tests. I was nervous, since I knew the night we destroyed the mirror Sev and I made love, and I forgot to take any precautions. I was pretty sure he hadn’t either. I hadn’t planned on getting pregnant till we were married for at least a year and here it had only been a few weeks! Well, anyway, when it was positive I didn’t know if I should break down and cry or jump for joy. I decided to try and get everyone out for the evening so I could tell Severus. Unfortunately, it never happened. When I came downstairs for breakfast Moony was sitting next to me with Phaedra on the opposite side. Sev was at the head of the table as usual. Sirius was facing us on the opposite side with Tiberius. I wasn’t saying much, being lost in my thoughts about what to do, when Sev became concerned thinking something was wrong.” Harry began relating the story to Albus, smiling as she remembered the conversation at the breakfast table...

“Harry, you’re awfully quiet. Are you not feeling well? You seem a bit pale,” Severus inquired, concern etching his features.

“What? No, I’m fine, I was just thinking is all. I guess I’m not very hungry this morning.”

“Are you sure Harry? Severus is right, you look a bit peaked. Did you sleep okay?” Sirius studied her closely.

“Sirius, I slept fine. I’m just not really hungry.” The smell of the food was making her stomach queasy.

“Well, you certainly don’t look fine. Maybe you should go and see Pomfrey.”

“I said I was okay, all right, so just drop it.”

“Sirius and Severus are just concerned is all, Princess,” Remus remarked, stirring his tea thoughtfully. “Your scent is different today though,” he said, giving Harry quick sniff.

“Lupin, what do you mean that her scent is different? Is she coming down with something?”

“I would say she already has.” He grinned over his cup at Harry.

“That settles it, Harry, I will fire call Poppy as soon as we have finished eating. If I have learned nothing else in all the years I have known Lupin, it’s that his werewolf senses are very rarely wrong when it comes to things like illness,” Severus declared.

“I said I was fine!” Harry exclaimed. “You should keep your bloody nose out of my business!” Harry glared back at Remus, who was trying desperately not to laugh. Across the table Tiberius raised his brow and kept silent.

“Lupin, what is so funny? If my wife is ill you would do well to show some concern!” Severus seethed. “It could be something serious, and you look like it is just something to joke about.”

“I’m Sirius, and I could do with a good joke when I’m not feeling well,” Sirius kidded trying to lighten Severus’ mood as he studied the two sitting across the table.

“You’re not funny, Black. If Harry is ill you should show a little more decorum.”

“I am worried, Snape, but Moony seems to believe it is nothing too bad or he wouldn’t be trying to hold in his laughter.”

“Well, Lupin, what is so funny? Is something wrong with Harry or not?”

“You could say that,” he answered, swallowing a mouthful of tea. “It’s nothing that won’t pass by itself though.” He ducked his head trying to avoid Harry’s glare, but she was having none of it. Tiberius kept his face blank. He had his own suspicions about what was wrong with Harry.

“I told you to keep your nose out of my business, Remus, and I meant it.” Harry scowled, followed by a loud thunk from beneath the table.

“Ow! You didn’t have to kick me. I wasn’t going to tell, you know.”

“See that you don’t!”

“Tell what? Lupin what is going on?” Severus was becoming angry now, frustrated at the hidden innuendo between his wife and her Protector.

“You’d better tell, Harry, I am not in the mood for one of Severus’ hexes.” Remus smiled in her direction.

“Humph, I’ll tell someone all right, and then just you wait Remus. It is not supposed to be like this.” Harry pouted before turning to Phaedra. The child had been watching the adults curiously, confused by the conversation.

“Phaedra,” Harry addressed her in Parseltongue, a trait Harry had passed onto her when they had been kidnapped. “I know you’re wondering what is going on. Your Uncle Moony’s werewolf nose has detected that my scent is different.”

“I know that, Aunt Harry, but why? You aren’t really sick are you? If you were he wouldn’t be laughing.”

“You’re right. I was going to tell your Uncle Sev tonight, but since this commotion started I think I will tell you first.” Harry took a deep breath, before continuing. “I am going to have a baby.”

“Really, when will it be? I am going to have a cousin?” she asked excitedly.

“Yeah, the baby will be born in the spring.”

“Oh, Aunt Harry, I am so excited. I can’t wait. Can I tell Uncles Sev, Tiberius and Sirius? Please let me tell.”

“Yes, you can tell them.”

Sirius and Sev watched her speaking with Phaedra in Parseltongue. Her godfather and husband seemed worried but Remus was studying the ceiling, feigning innocence. Whatever was wrong, Harry apparently felt Phaedra should know, and Phaedra’s reaction only increased their fears.

“Uncle Severus, everybody,” she began, only to be stopped by a hand on her shoulder.

“Phaedra you are still speaking in Parseltongue. They can’t understand you,” Harry chuckled.

“Oh, sorry, I was so excited I forgot.” She blushed, brown eyes wide with her secret. “Uncle Sev, everybody, Aunt Harry told me a secret. I know what is wrong and she said I could tell.”

“Phaedra, what ever is wrong I promise you that I will make sure your Aunt gets better. There is no need to be frightened,” Severus stated, believing his niece to be worried.

“I’m not scared, Uncle Sev. Aunt Harry will be better in a few months just like Uncle Moony said.”

“Phaedra, what did she say to you?” Severus asked, glancing towards Sirius, who seemed equally confused at this point. He missed the slight twitch of Tiberius, lips.

"Oh, she told me that she's going to have a baby." She grinned smugly. "It will come in the spring."

Severus sat, frozen, brows drawn up in shock. Sirius jaw dropped and Remus ducked his head, unable to conceal his laughter at the expressions on his friend's faces. Tiberius merely inclined his head with a smug look. It took about ten seconds for the reality to sink in for the three younger wizards. When it finally did, Sirius let out a whoop and Severus knocked his chair backwards, leaping around the table, squeezing Harry in a bear hug. Remus grin grew even bigger and looked decidedly wolfish...

"My dear that is a wonderful story," Dumbledore chuckled. "I remember the day when Severin was born. Severus was so proud but he was also worried to death about you. Between the birth, and how his concern over your feelings about whether you had a boy or a girl. He told me that you kept hoping for a little girl."

"I was. My insecurities about his having lost his first wife and son reared their ugly heads while I was pregnant. He did everything he could to reassure me that it didn't matter, that we would have found one another anyway, but my hormones kept getting the better of me. I spent the pregnancy going from happy, to worried and crying. It was amazing that he was as patient as he was." Harry smiled at the memory. "We were still here at Hogwarts when I went into labor two weeks early. I was in the middle of teaching a class when my water broke."

"If I recall correctly, you just dismissed the class and summoned Poppy."

"I did. I knew Sev was giving an exam that period and didn't want to interrupt him. Poppy just walked me up to the infirmary and put me in a bed. I wouldn't let her call him till he was done with his class. Unfortunately, she summoned Sirius and Remus who went down and got him."

“Indeed, I believe he was furious. They burst into his classroom while the Seventh years were brewing a delicate potion for their final prior to the Easter holiday.”

“He damn near hexed Sirius,” she laughed. “When they burst into the classroom one of the students jumped in panic dropping too much Henbane into the cauldron and it nearly exploded.”

“If I recall, Remus had to use his werewolf strength to grab onto Severus and hold him back once he dismissed the class.”

“Yeah, Sirius had his wand out and they were ready to duel, but Remus quickly told him why they had come in like that. Next thing they knew Severus ran from the classroom at breakneck speed, all the way up from the dungeons, to get to the infirmary. Sirius told me later that Remus was almost as fast being a werewolf but he had to transform to keep up with them.”

“Only to find you lying calmly, not yet in hard labor,” Albus stated, eyes twinkling.

“I know. I wanted Severus to go back to his classes but he refused. Sirius and Remus wanted to stay too, but Poppy said they had to wait outside. She only let Sev stay with me. I’m glad she did though. I was more scared than I was willing to admit. He knew it though. He just sat down next to me and took my hand. It turned out to be a long and difficult labor too,” Harry said, letting her mind wander back to the birth of their first child...

Poppy stood over her, waving her wand in an intricate circle. It had been fourteen hours, and Harry was tired. Poppy frowned, shaking her head, and looked over at Severus, worry clouding her features.

“What’s wrong?” Severus inquired, keeping his worry under control.

“I won’t lie to either of you. The baby is still breeched, and shows no sign of turning on its own. I may be able to turn the child, but if not I will need to call for help from St. Mungo’s to do a cesarean.”

"I don't want a section," Harry moaned, as another strong contraction wracked her tired body.

"I know, Harry, but the labor has been going on for too long. You're exhausted and the child may go into distress if it isn't born soon," Poppy stated.

"You said you may be able to turn the baby?" Severus questioned.

"Yes, but I will need you to help hold Harry. It will be quite painful and I will also need to keep an eye on the monitoring charms to monitor the fetus heart rate."

"Please...Poppy...I want to try," Harry gasped as another pain wracked through her back and into her abdomen.

"I know, Harry, but I want you to understand that if it doesn't work I will be calling St. Mungo's." Harry nodded her understanding and the mediwitch turned towards Severus. "Severus, I will need you to get behind Harry and keep her as still as possible. I can't give her anymore pain killers or it could interfere with the baby."

"I understand, Poppy." Severus gently sat down and pulled Harry up onto his chest, arms around her so that her upper body was held still and whispered into her ear. "It will be all right, Harry. I'm here with you and our child will be born soon," He soothed as he felt her body stiffen, face contorted in pain, a sob escaping her.

Once the contraction eased, Poppy placed Harry's legs in a set of magical stirrups, so she was unable to move. Putting on a pair of sterile gloves, she sat down on the stool at the bottom of the bed waiting for the next contraction. Harry was fully dilated, but the baby was trapped, and she also had to worry that the cord could become compressed or wrapped about the infant's neck while she tried to turn the child.

"Harry when the contraction starts you have to try not to push," she instructed.

Harry nodded weakly as she felt the tightening of her muscles begin once again. Severus tightened his arms around her as Poppy reached up inside of her and pushed upwards, while the contraction intensified. Harry screamed, breaths coming in shallow gasps as she tried not to bear down.

“I know it hurts, Harry, but it will be over soon,” Severus soft voice soothed. “Just think about our baby and how much I love you,” he whispered.

As the contraction began to ease off, Poppy leaped up and pushed sideways on Harry’s swollen abdomen, watching the fetal monitor, attempting to get the child to move back and around. Harry screamed again.

“Sev,” she sobbed, “this feels like someone is putting the Cruciatus curse on my insides. I can’t do this. Please make it stop.”

“Harry look at me,” Severus said, making a quick decision. Harry was growing more agitated and was so exhausted, sweat dripping from her forehead from the strain. “Come on, look at me,” he coaxed. Her eyes met his and she immediately felt the push of his mind into hers. He was there with her, sharing their happiest memories, holding her in his arms, soft voice telling her how much he cared. He could sense her pain, both physical and emotional, and told her how he didn’t care what sex their child was. He just wanted them both to be safe and happy. Harry held tight, resting her head on his chest, the warmth of their bond giving her strength.

“Severus, I’m done,” Poppy’s voice came from far away, as he slowly withdrew from Harry’s mind, aware of the Mediwitch patting his arm. “I was able to turn the child.”

“Will it be much longer, Poppy? Harry is exhausted and I do not believe she can take much more.”

“Harry is a strong young woman, Severus. She survived Voldemort, but to answer your question, no, it shouldn’t be more than another hour if that,” she replied, ignoring his glare when she mentioned the

Dark Lord. She looked down, conjuring a damp cloth she wiped the sweat from Harry's brow. "Harry, I want you to push with each contraction. Can you do that for me?"

"I'll...try. I am...just so...tired."

"I know, dear, but your baby wants to come out and you will have to help."

Harry simply nodded as she was engulfed in another contraction. Severus eased out from behind her, sitting down in the chair at her bedside, offering encouragement, as she strained to deliver their child. Twenty minutes later, Harry's eyes opened wide, and Poppy smiled.

"Two more, Harry, and your baby will be here!"

Harry pushed with the last of her strength as she felt the baby's head emerge and giving on final effort, she felt the child slide from her body. Exhausted, she closed her eyes relaxing with the blissful end of pain, drifting into a half sleep, listening to the sounds around her. She was vaguely aware that Severus had gotten up from his seat and was speaking quietly with Poppy. Suddenly she realized she didn't hear the baby, and her eyes snapped open.

"Poppy, what's wrong? The baby isn't crying!" She looked at the older woman in panic.

"Nothing's wrong, Harry." She smiled warmly. Gently lifting what Harry saw to be the child's foot, she gave it a light tap on the sole, and a loud wail ensued. She wrapped the tiny bundle keeping it hidden from Harry's full view and handed it to Severus. Awkwardly cradling the bundle he soothed the tiny child, moving back to sit beside her on the bed.

The door to the infirmary opened, Sirius and Remus poking their heads in when they heard the baby start to cry. Remus held Sirius back, allowing him to only pass into the infirmary to give the couple a few minutes alone with their new baby. Severus spoke quietly to his wife, but both men could hear what he was saying.

“Harry,” he looked at his wife, a small smile touching his lips, “We have a son.” Much to his relief, Harry smiled back, reaching out for the infant. “You’re not upset that it isn’t a girl?”

“No, Sev, I think he’s beautiful.” Harry held the tiny bundle studying his face, running a finger over his soft cheek. “He looks like you.” She smiled.

“Fortunately, he does not have my nose.”

“Nope, I think he has my mums, cause it certainly isn’t mine either.”

“I believe you are correct.” He nodded.

“He has your long fingers too.” Severus merely pursed his lips in amusement, his eyes shining with pride.

“Does he have a name yet?” Sirius asked, breaking free from Remus and moving towards the couple.

“Siri, give them some time alone!” Remus growled, trying to pull him back.

Severus glanced at his wife, and motioned them both forward. He would spend time with her after they left, but for now he knew she would want them to see their son.

“Are you okay, Princess?”

“Just tired, Moony. Have you both been out there all this time?”

“You didn’t think we would be anywhere else did you? It’s not every day my goddaughter has a baby!” Sirius huffed, grinning from ear to ear. Moving around Severus he planted a kiss on her head.

“In answer to your first question, Black, no he does not have a name. Harry wanted to wait till the baby was born before choosing a name.”

“Well, as the father of the first born male tradition says that you are the one to name him,” Sirius remarked. “Do you have anything in mind?”

“I thought perhaps that keeping with the tradition of my family of using Latin names Claudius Octavian would be suitable.”

“Yuck, don’t you dare name him that!” Harry looked up at her husband with pleading eyes.

“Why not? Claudius was my great great uncle and Octavian was also a several times distant grandparent. The names are usually given from a deceased relation also.”

“I hate to admit it Severus, but I agree with Harry.” Sirius shook his head.

“It is far superior than naming one’s children after a constellation.”

“I wouldn’t let Draco hear you say that,” Remus remarked. “Narcissa kept to the Black tradition when they named Draco.”

“Only because Lucius agreed before hand as her father had no male heir himself.”

“Please don’t argue,” Harry sighed.

“It’s all right, Harry, since you don’t like the name I will let you suggest one. Just keep in mind it should be Latin and have been the name of at least one deceased relative on the paternal side.

“No Sirius, I am not going to use James,” she stated. “Not this time anyway, but I did consider something beforehand just in case.” She grinned sheepishly up at the three wizards. Severus had arched his brow, Remus chuckled softly, and Sirius was rolling his eyes. “What, you didn’t think I knew there was a fifty fifty chance we would have a son.”

“It’s all right, Harry, I understand how you were feeling.” Severus gently brushed a hand over her hair. “So what is this name you think we should consider?” Harry beamed up at him, pleased that he would allow her to help name their first born.

“Well, I think it will make sense. Especially now that I have seen him. I like Severin Tiberius.”

“Severin is a variation of Severus, Harry, but he is not deceased and neither is Tiberius.” Remus pointed out.

“No, Harry is correct. I had an ancestor named Severin on the Prince side. I believe that I may have been given the variation for him, and Tiberius will be pleased.”

“I hate to admit it, but I like it myself. I must be getting soft in my old age,” Sirius sighed, but his mischievous expression belied his words.

“Sirius, what are you up to?” Harry studied her godfather.

“Nothing, I just can’t wait to get little Snivellus junior up onto a broom to bring out his Potter side.”

“Sirius, that is not funny!” Harry burst into tears, exhaustion and her godfather’s sick sense of humor taking their toll.

“Harry, I didn’t mean it, I swear! I just wanted to tease Severus but it really was in bad taste. I will never call this little guy by that nickname again, or Severus either. Just don’t cry.”

“Harry, it’s all right. I am used to the mutt and his remarks.” Severus glared at Sirius.

“When will the two of you just stop it!” she sobbed, cradling the baby who had begun to whimper.

"Princess, they just like to bait one another for fun. There really is no more real animosity between them."

"Remus is right, Harry. I accepted Severus a long time ago. He loves you and that is all that matters to me. If he makes you happy then I'm happy." He cupped Harry's tear streaked face bringing it up to look at him. "You're tired. You had a rough time. Why don't you go to sleep? I know Sev is tired as well but I doubt very much he plans on leaving the infirmary any time soon."

"Not until I know Harry is sleeping peacefully. Then I will go and notify Tiberius and Phaedra about the birth."

"That's all right, Severus. Moony and I can do that. You just spend time here with Harry and little Severin." Sirius looked at Harry fondly. "By the way he really is a nice little chap. Do you mind if I hold him before we leave?" He directed his question towards Severus.

Severus merely nodded and placed the baby into his arms, easing Harry back onto the pillows, his annoyance having faded. He looked on in amusement as Sirius fussed over the child, Remus adding his own two cents worth. He was a bit uneasy when the werewolf took the child, but he knew Lupin would never do anything intentionally to harm his son. He spotted Albus standing quietly near the doors, blue eyes twinkling merrily. He turned back to Harry and began to card his fingers through her hair, talking softly until her breathing level off alerting him that she had fallen asleep...

Coming out of her reverie, Harry glanced over to where Severus' frame still remained empty. "Still not back yet," she sighed.

"Harry you know what Severus is like when he is working on a potion," Dumbledore reminded her. "I am sure he will be back as soon as he can."

"I really miss him, you know. I miss them all." Green eyes stole over to the pictures of Sirius, Remus, and their adopted daughter, Antares, Harry's goddaughter.

“Harry, Sirius and Remus had a good life together. Sirius died saving his grandson, Phoenix, and Remus survived longer than most do with his condition.”

“I know, Albus. It still hurts though. I’ll never forget the look on Remus face when he told me what happened. It felt almost like history repeated itself.”

“I know. When you were finally came up to the office to tell me I almost couldn’t believe it.”

“Remus was just so stunned,” Harry remarked, green eyes clouding when she remembered what had happened. “They had gone to meet Sirius for lunch at the Ministry, but he was tied up in court. I always worried about Sirius when he gave up teaching here at Hogwarts to go back to work as an Auror. I just had a bad feeling about it. You know how I still feel about the Ministry.” Albus’ portrait nodded in affirmation as Harry continued. “Anyway, they were talking with Mr. Weasley; he was finally retiring, and didn’t realize right away that Phoenix had wandered off. Sirius came out of the courtroom and asked where he was. Antares had only turned her head for a few minutes but it was enough. They started searching immediately, and Sirius transformed to pick up his scent. How he ever got into the Department of Mysteries I’ll never know. After Voldemort it was supposed to be so heavily warded that only the Unspeakables could get through. He was in the Death Chamber looking at the veil. From what Moony said, he could hear the voices and was going to walk right into it. Sirius just leaped forward, as he went to step through, knocking him out of the way. He transformed back as he did so, but his body was twisted and he fell backwards, passing through the veil. Moony had grabbed onto Phoenix and was just holding onto him.” Harry shook her head, recalling when Sirius had fallen through during her rescue attempt in fifth year. “I hoped for a long time that he would come back again...” her voice trailed off.

“I understand you all searched for him at Grimauld Place, even though the house was never repaired.”

“Yeah, we did. The only good thing was that Phoenix was too young to understand that his grandfather was dead. We told him that he went to visit Uncle James. After awhile he just stopped asking when he would be back. He was only three at the time.”

“Fortunately, Remus held up, although I believe that he blamed himself right up until his dying day.”

“I know, Albus, but it wasn’t his fault or Antares,” Harry sighed. “Sirius and Remus would have been so proud of Phoenix. He’s head of the Auror division now.”

“I’m sure they are, Harry, and Remus lived a long time for a werewolf. Mercifully he died peacefully in his bed with his family around him.”

“Even with the Wolfsbane Potion he just couldn’t handle any more transformations. His poor body was just too worn out.” Harry fell silent for a few moments. “I know they would have been thrilled with their great grandchildren too.”

“Not to mention, all of yours,” Albus chuckled.

“Remember the look on Severus’ face when they told him our second child’s name?”

“Well he did agree to allow them to name him,” Albus laughed.

“It wasn’t Severus’ fault he missed the birth. The floo network was a mess with that blizzard. He couldn’t apparate because of the storm. By the time he got a portkey home from that potions conference in Austria, Remus and Sirius had delivered the baby. Poppy was stuck here and couldn’t get to Snape castle. We didn’t expect him to be born over the Christmas holiday.”

“He was grateful that everything was all right with you both.”

“Well, our second son was in a bit of a hurry. Severus blamed the Potter genes for his birth coming so fast. Fortunately, he had my mum’s Evans features.” Harry grinned. “At least they kept to the Latin names. Otherwise, I think Sev would have exploded. He always claimed they did it to get even, but I think he secretly felt that the name fit him.”

“Indeed it did. Romulus Rex Snape. He was a magnificent Quidditch player, just like his mother and grandfather. Not to mention that his animagus form was an Irish wolfhound.”

“I think Sirius had a lot to do with that. He gave him a broom when he was two. Sev had a fit.”

“Ah, but he always cheered for him when he played here at Hogwarts.”

“That and he was on the Slytherin team, and later became Captain. Severus was delighted when he was sorted into his house, Severin having been put into Ravenclaw.”

“It gave him the opportunity to keep an eye on him. I was retired by then and Severus was Minerva’s assistant.”

“I’d say poor Romulus, but he adored his father, even though he often found himself over his knee. Sev was the first person he told when he made it to the Pro’s.”

“Severus always said he was the Slytherin equivalent of a Marauder, with the cunning and slyness of his house. He often wondered if you had listened to the Sorting Hat if you would have been the same.”

“Nah, I would have been too busy fighting off the Junior Deatheaters.”

“I personally think you would have kept more of them from joining Voldemort.”

“Maybe, but it’s water under the bridge now.” Harry shrugged. “He was a great father. He even named our youngest son after my parents. Hadrian James Evan Snape. He told me that he was still moved by the night they accepted him following their resurrection and wanted me to know it.”

“He was in Gryffindor, like his grandparents, so I think he was aptly named.”

“Yes. I’m sorry you never really got to know him. He was born the week after you passed away.”

“Harry, I did get to know him. His brother, Romulus, may only have gotten caught in his antics here at school by his father, but I believe his Uncle Remus sent Hadrian up to this office a number of times.”

“As did his mother.” She arched her brow with a smirk. “Severus caught him sneaking into the Potions lab on more than one occasion with the invisibility cloak to brew some potion or other.”

“He did like to brew. He still does. He is the school’s Potions Master, just like his father before him.”

“He didn’t find out till he was older that I gave Severus the Marauder’s map to keep an eye on the boys while they were here at school.”

“Ah, so that’s how his father always knew what he was up to in his lab.”

“He never told him that he used to disillusion himself and watch, just to make certain he would be all right and not blow anything up. Once he was done he would sneak up on him and scare the daylights out of him.” Harry smirked. “Hadrian always wished he could be as silent as his father.”

“I think he does just fine. I know Severus was very proud when he followed in his footsteps and took his Mastery in Potions. I remember

when Severus became Headmaster, and Hadrian came to work at Hogwarts. He was thrilled to not only have his son as the new Potions Master, but also head of Gryffindor House.”

“At least our family has been well represented here at Hogwarts in each of the houses. We were all a bit shocked when Phaedra ended up in Hufflefuff. Once we thought about though we realized she really was loyal. It’s a shame she never married.”

“In many ways she always reminded me of Poppy. They both cared about the children they cared for.”

“She still does. We all thought Poppy drove us crazy when she was the school’s Mediwitch. Hah! Phaedra makes her look like a saint. She’s liable to tie the kids to the beds to keep them from leaving the infirmary until they’re fully healed.”

“Not to mention her aunt, the current Headmistress.” Dumbledore’s blue eyes twinkled furiously. “I heard about your little stunt on the Quidditch Pitch.”

“I only broke my arm, nothing serious.” Harry glared at the portrait.

“You know how much she loves you, Harry. You’re not a young woman any more.”

“Humph, I can still out fly most of this school!”

“Gryffindor foolishness! You are far to old to be flying about like a banshee!” An oily voice sneered slipping into the frame on the wall above her.

“Sev, you’re back!” Harry exclaimed in delight, looking up at her late Husband’s portrait. He was painted younger than when he had passed away, with only some light gray streaks in his hair, to mark the passage of time.

“Of course, someone has to make sure you don’t demolish the school. Albus still lets you get away with too much mischief. At least you don’t offer the staff those infernal lemon drops!” Severus rolled his eyes as Dumbledore’s portrait reached into his pocket, pulling out his favorite sweet.

“Aren’t you going to ask me how things went with the time turner?”

“Obviously, the way you had planned, as you are still Headmistress and nothing has changed.” He sneered down at his wife, but his eyes were warm. “However, I am pleased to know that I was missed.”

“I’ve missed you for these past twenty years.” Harry moved from her seat, reaching up to touch his cheek on the canvas. Her eyes filled with tears, but she refused to let them fall, turning away for a moment. Her beloved husband had died of a heart attack following their one hundredth wedding anniversary. It had been sudden and swift and she was grateful that he didn’t suffer. His last words were, ‘Harry, I love you. I’ll be waiting.’ He then closed his eyes as the light faded from his onyx orbs and sighed his last breath. Harry would have been inconsolable, were it not for her family, and the portrait which magically appeared in the now Headmistress’ office. She had always found it amazing that his portrait was of his younger self. He had told her that was how he wished to be remembered by her. “Will the child in St. Mungo’s recover?” she asked, changing the subject.

“He will. His mother was most grateful. I had to leave before she soiled my canvas with her incessant tears. I left Severin to deal with her. He is quite adept at that sort of thing.” His voice held its usual snide tone, but Harry knew he was thinking of their lost daughter, Olivia.

“I’m glad,” she whispered. “It’s been a long day. I think I’ll just sit for a while and have a nice hot cup of tea and some biscuits. I’m feeling rather cold, despite the sunny weather.” Summoning a house elf, she settled herself back in the chair, lighting a fire in the hearth with her wand before covering her legs with a blanket.

Staring into the fire, she quietly sipped her tea, thinking of her long life. It seemed like only yesterday that she had boarded the Hogwarts Express for the first time, a scared child, masquerading as a boy. That was when she had first met Ron and Hermione, her best friends. They too, were gone now, Ron having passed away two years ago, peacefully, in his sleep. Hermione had not been so lucky. She had developed the Muggle disease Alzheimer's when she was in her nineties. It had pained Harry deeply to watch her friend loose her memory, her brilliant mind slowly being taken from her. Ron had taken care of her up to the end though, and Harry couldn't have been more proud of him. He had been a good father too. His daughter Rose and son Hugo had grown into fine adults. Rose was now senior researcher for the Department of Mysteries and Hugo, oddly enough, was the head of S.P.E.W., his mother's foundation to aid the plight of the house elves. He had been instrumental in expanding it to include other magical beings as well, and had won the Magical equivalent of the Nobel Prize.

Harry was still close with the succeeding members of the Weasley clan, and her own great-great granddaughter was dating one of Hugo's progeny of the same generation here at Hogwarts. Ginny had finally married Draco, and like her mother, had proceeded to fill Malfoy Manor with a large brood of children, something no one had ever expected. Draco had been delighted, having been an only child. Surprisingly, of their five children, none had been sorted into Slytherin House until the following generation. Draco had staunchly stated that it was just too much Weasley influence, but had always said it with a smile towards his wife. They had both died tragically, when a long distance Portkey failed, following a holiday in Egypt, falling to their deaths from several hundred feet in the air.

Neville, had gone on to study for his Herbology Mastery, and taken over for Professor Sprout, but had retired from Hogwarts five years ago. He had passed away last month, and Harry had spoken at his funeral, remembering the shy, brave boy from their youth. Luna had married him, and continued to run the Quibbler for her father. She had also become known as a brilliant seer, but preferred to remain in seclusion until her death at one hundred and three. It was Luna who had predicted that Harry would live to be the last of their generation, having secured the future of the Wizarding World, her final destiny.

Harry had never told her friends about the old woman she had met as a teenager, but Luna had somehow seen what was to come, and simply smiled serenely, a vague smile on her face. She and Neville had only one child, a girl, whom they had named Moon. She had never married, and when Neville had passed away, she sold the Quibbler to one of the Weasleys twins grandson's, retiring to Australia.

Harry's mind continued to drift as she looked at the pictures on her mantle. Hagrid with his wife, Madam Maxime, who had both been killed in an Avalanche in the Swiss Alps, Dean, Seamus, the Creevey brothers, Dobby, Winky, and so many others. All of them were gone now, yet living on through their children and grandchildren, never having to fear the darkness that had been Lord Voldemort.

She shifted to try and get comfortable attempting to doze. Her body ached. The crick in her neck felt as if it were traveling down into her left arm, the chill continuing to creep into her tired limbs. Fighting the fatigue which was overcoming her, she glanced up at the portraits of her husband and mentor. Severus was sitting in his chair, pretending to read a book, looking at her surreptitiously through his black hair. Dumbledore was softly snoring. Although, she suspected he was not really sleeping. The other portraits shuffled softly within their frames. She could feel Phineas Nigellus watchful gray eyes staring at her back. She sensed that they knew something she could not quite put her finger on, but dismissed the notion as exhaustion, her eyes drifting shut once again, thinking about summoning a potion for the growing ache within her body. She knew she should put her teacup back on the table, but was unable to move, sighing, as the cup slipped from her fingers to the floor. Somewhere off in the distance she could hear the Hogwarts bell begin to toll, never seeing the portrait of the young woman, which had mysteriously appeared upon the wall between Severus and Dumbledore...

Hadrian Snape had been helping his cousin Phaedra restock the infirmary, when they heard the bell begin to toll. He looked up quickly, dark gray eyes meeting brown. For a fleeting moment, Phaedra was reminded of her uncles. Both Hadrian and his elder brother had the sharp Snape features, but Hadrian had dark gray eyes, where as Severin had his father's black. Romulus on the other hand looked more like Harry's relatives, with his wild mane of dark chestnut hair

and green eyes, the Evans and Potter influence clearly seen. All three of the boys had inherited the rich baritone voice that the Snape males were so proud of. Fortunately, none of them had inherited the infamous Snape nose. She didn't ponder over this thought however, since Hadrian had started to stride towards the doors of the infirmary, robes billowing behind, just as his father's had, while the bell continued to toll. She followed behind, struggled with her emotions, knowing Hadrian was doing the same. The slow tolling of the bell at this hour could only mean one thing...

Harry was drifting, feeling strangely light headed. She stretched; surprised that she no longer felt any discomfort from the aches which usually accompanied her old limbs on a daily basis. 'Humph,' she thought. 'So much for Phaedra believing that playing that round of Quidditch would cause more harm than good.' She was no longer cold, a hot glow suffusing her and attributed it to the fire and the warm sun hitting the blanket covering her legs. 'Think I'll just snooze a bit more. It'll be nice to get some relaxation in before dinner,' she mused, without opening her eyes. 'I hope they have the treacle tart for pudding tonight. I'm getting bored with Phaedra pushing fruit on me all the time. Who cares if she thinks it's good for my digestion. I never would have believed that a child who had loved chocolate so much would become such a diet crazed Mediwitch!' She was mulling this over in her mind when she thought she heard a soft giggle. 'Now what would a student be up to in the tower? I do hope one of my great grandchildren hasn't been up to some more pranks. Sev will be absolutely livid if I so much as let them off with a warning again. Of course, telling them that I could charm his portrait to come out from the frame and give them a good spanking didn't seem to hurt,' she chuckled to herself. 'They're faces were absolutely hilarious. They actually believed it and were quite repentant after that. Obviously they heard from their parents and grandparents what a heavy hand he had when necessary.' Amused by this idea she determined not to let whatever was going on interfere with her nice comfortable state, when she became aware of soft whispers from over by her office door. She swore she heard someone telling the child to be quiet, but this was only accompanied by another bout of giggles.

"I don't know what you are up to but I warn you that if I have to get out of this chair you will be in detention for a month!" Harry stated

aloud, making her voice as ominous as possible, clenching her eyes shut. She truly did not want to get up from her nap! She listened for a few minutes, only to be met with silence. "Good, at least I learned how to finally scare the little imps to make them behave," she said. "Now I can get back to my nap." Once again feeling that serene sense of drifting, she welcomed the feelings of tranquility, a slow smile gracing her lips, when she became aware of a soft tugging on her arm, a child's voice whispering into her ear.

"Mummy, wake up. Granny Lils and Grandpa James said you were coming home with us today!"

"Oh, 'Livia, let mummy take her nap....Olivia!" Harry's eyes snapped open, as she leaped from the chair, landing on the floor in a heap. Peering down at her was a pair of emerald eyes with fine dark brows, surrounded by a mane of thick black curls, a pert nose, and fine lips, now drawn up into a big smile. Harry could only stare, eyes wide, her mouth gaping.

"Mummy, are you okay? Granny Lils said you would be happy to see me, but you don't look happy. Daddy always says you look like a fish when you do that thing with your mouth," she babbled, looking over her shoulder uncertainly.

Harry closed her mouth, following the little girl's gaze, when her mouth dropped open once more. Standing in the doorway were her parents, Lily and James Potter, Tiberius Snape, Padfoot, Moony, her best friends, Ron and Hermione, and a host of others. Blinking, she shook her head, letting her eyes sweep around the room. On the floor beside where she had landed lay a broken tea cup, an old woman's arm hanging limply. Still unable to speak she turned her head to look over towards the portraits of her mentor and husband, only to find them strangely absent, but a new portrait sat between them, sleeping peacefully. It was a younger version of herself, made to compliment that of the portrait of Severus. The Hogwarts bell was tolling its lament through out the castle. Harry looked back towards the child, reaching up her arms.

“Olivia? Oh baby, I’ve missed you so,” she sobbed, grasping onto her with a fierce hug. “My beautiful little girl.”

“Hey, we could say the same thing, you know,” James Potter quipped coming forward, pulling Harry and Olivia into a hug.

“Dad...Mum,” Harry choked, reaching out towards her mother. Lily immediately joined their embrace before leading them back towards the door.

Harry immediately began hugging relatives and friends alike, laughing and crying at the same time, when suddenly she froze.

“Harry what’s wrong?” Lily questioned, noting her daughter looking around anxiously.

“Where’s Severus?” When no answer was forthcoming, she looked at Albus, who merely shrugged. Harry began to panic. Her husband was not there. “He promised he would wait for me,” she wailed.

“Harry, don’t cry,” Remus soothed, while James and Sirius looked from one to the other. “I’m sure he’ll be along shortly.”

“How do you know? Where is he?” She continued to look at countless relatives and friends, frantically scanning the crowd, when Olivia giggled.

“Olivia, where is daddy?” Harry questioned, swinging back to look at the child, James now held in his arms.

“Uncle Paddy played a prank on him when we were getting ready to come.”

“Prank? What sort of prank? I swear, Padfoot, if you don’t tell me....”

“I...uh...hid his robes.” Sirius smirked.

“YOU WHAT!” Lily and Harry yelled simultaneously.

“And what part of this prank were you involved in JAMES POTTER?” Lily screeched, green eyes flashing furiously.

“Well...Lils....I uh...sort of...uh...charmed the door...to lock him in,” he mumbled quickly.

“Moony, how could you let them get away with doing this?” Harry frowned, taking in the werewolf’s guilty expression. “Didn’t you learn anything from all the time we spent together with the Protectorship?”

“Yes, Harry, we all learned something. Even your dad. We learned how much you cared about one another. Soulmates like that deserve a special reunion. We simply made sure you got one. By the way, Olivia helped to keep him distracted.” He waved his hands with a sly grin. The crowd of relatives and friends silently moved aside, slowly fading back towards the afterlife, leaving the door to the landing ajar. Prongs, Padfoot, and Moony, pulled Lily with them, leaving Olivia standing with her mother, revealing a tall pale figure dressed in black robes within the door.

“Sev...” Harry whispered, green eyes locking with onyx.

“I’ve been waiting, Harry,” he replied softly, taking two swift strides into the room. Sweeping her into his arms, he brought his mouth to her lips, locking them into a passionate kiss, only to be interrupted by their daughter’s giggles.

“Now what, pray tell, do you find so funny young lady?” Severus looked down his long nose at his daughter.

“You and mummy are kissing. Uncle Paddy and grandpa said you would.” She beamed up at her parents. “Are you still mad at them for pranking you?”

“Perhaps, they had your mother’s feelings at heart.” He looked at Harry again, brushing his lips over hers. However,” he picked his daughter up, “We need to be getting on home.”

“And just where is home?” Harry asked, following him out of the door.

“Why, second star to the right and straight on till morning,” he teased, quirking the corners of his lips. “Or if you prefer our next great adventure.” Putting his arms around his family they faded away, knowing that they would see their other children in due time, the door to the Headmaster’s office slowly swinging shut...

Hadrian and Phaedra reached the landing and burst through the door. Harry looked like she had fallen asleep, a smile on her face. Phaedra was about to sigh in relief when she realized Hadrian was checking for a pulse. They both looked up at the wall when Severus quietly spoke.

“As you can see, Son, that will not be necessary.” He indicated the sleeping portrait of his wife. His son closed his eyes for a moment, collecting his emotions, as Phaedra burst into tears. “Phaedra, she is finally at peace, and it is not as if you will not see her again. In the meantime you will all be able to speak with her when she wakes.”

“Dad is right, mum would want us to go on with our lives. As much as it pains me to say it, I know she and dad are together right now with Uncle Ti, and Olivia, as well as the Potters and Uncles Padfoot and Moony.”

“I know. I am going to miss her though.” Phaedra turned away, wiping her tears. “She taught me so much. Aunt Harry was my second mother, but she never let me forget my own mum.”

“When I was little I remember hearing her talk to you about Circe. She said that she would want you to go on and be happy. There was also something about some mirror.”

"Yes. I always let them believe that I didn't really remember what happened, but I did. I owed her my life and my soul, as well as our uncles."

"Perhaps, later on, once we have grieved and the funeral is over you could tell me about it?"

"I think that would be nice, Hadrian. Family needs to stick together in times like this."

He nodded in understanding, summoning a house elf. He needed to notify his brothers, and have the younger children summoned from their houses. He realized that he was now acting Headmaster. Yes, he was grieving, but the school would be too. He was not alone. Hadrian looked up to see his father lips quirked in a slight smile, watching him with pride, as he silently slid into the portrait beside his sleeping mother, looking as she did in his youth. Once he had contacted his family and the Ministry, he would have to make sure the Daily Prophet reported his mother's obituary accurately and with the dignity she deserved. He knew just the person to write it properly too. Carefully picking up his mother's body, he carried her up to her bedroom, and ordered the house elf to summon the Heads of Houses, while Phaedra went back to the infirmary, to mourn in private.

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WIZARDING WORLD MOURNS THE PASSING OF

HARRY POTTER SNAPE, SAVIOR OF THE LIGHT

By: Jeddiah Ronald Weasley

Owner and Editor of the Quibbler

Harry Potter, defeater of Lord Voldemort, greatest dark wizard of the past century and current Headmistress of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry passed away quietly in her sleep of an apparent heart attack. Born in 1980, Harry was the only child of James and Lily Potter, nee Evans. She first stopped Voldemort as a toddler when her mother sacrificed herself to save her child. The Dark Lord's killing curse rebounded from the child's head, leaving nothing but her famous lightening bolt scar, while Voldemort was left disembodied and helpless. He remained this way for twelve years until finally, following the last Triwizard Tournament; he regained his body, to began his second reign of terror. Despite his numerous attempts on Harry Potter's life she continued to fight him, even during periods of adversity from the Ministry claiming that she was a delusional attention seeking child. Their final confrontation took place during the second resurrection of Lord Voldemort when he used Dark Necromancy to bring back the Potters.

During Harry's youth it was originally thought the she was a boy. This was a ploy by the late Albus Dumbledore and her parents. This plan was orchestrated to protect her from the Dark Wizards who wished her dead, as well as various prophecies made about her life. Harry Potter was a winner of the Triwizard Tournament at just fourteen. Prior to that she was able to save the Philosopher's Stone from falling into the hands of the Deatheaters, who planned to use it to resurrect Voldemort, during her first year at Hogwarts. It became know that she was a Parselmouth in her second year and many feared she would go Dark or that she was precipitating the petrifications which were happening at the school. These rumors proved to be unfounded and she managed to kill the lost Basilisk of Salazar Slytherin, which lurked within the Chamber of Secrets, hidden within the bowels of the school for centuries. In her third year, she was able to produce a Patronus Charm under the tutelage of the Defense Against the Dark Arts instructor, Remus Lupin. Lupin left the school when it became known that he was a werewolf, returning several years later, at the request of many of the parents, for his role in the war effort on the side of the light. In subsequent years, Harry Potter helped to form a clandestine teaching organization, Dumbledore's Army, when former Minister Fudge and his lackeys, attempted to take over the school and prevent our children from being able to defend themselves. She was also instrumental in clearing the name of Sirius Black, her godfather, from

murder charges. It was believed he had betrayed the Potter's and killed thirteen Muggles, but it was in actuality Peter Pettigrew, whom everyone believed dead.

Harry Potter was extremely gifted in Defense and was a multiple Animagus. The first since Merlin. Her Animagus forms were a Phoenix, a serpent, and a winged serpent, combining the two animals. She turned down a chance to become an Auror, her initial ambition, stating that she had had enough of fighting Dark Wizards. She was also a gifted Quidditch player and was recruited by several professional teams, but chose to become a teacher at Hogwarts instead. In her career on the Gryffindor Quidditch team she only failed to catch the snitch once, when the pitch was invaded by Dementors, and she passed out on her broom, nearly falling to her death.

Harry Potter married Professor Severus Snape, formally, Viscount Snape, and youngest Potions Master of record and a former teacher and Headmaster of Hogwarts. She succeeded to Headmistress upon his death twenty years ago. Professor Snape was a spy during both wars, and was also instrumental in the downfall of Lord Voldemort. They were formally wed in 1999 when she was nineteen and he was thirty nine. Prior to their formal vows they were joined in the Ancient Rite of Protectorship with Sirius Black and Remus Lupin. Both Black and Lupin were given the right to wed one another during the course of the Protectorship. They are both deceased.

Harry Potter Snape and Severus Snape are survived by three sons, Severin Tiberius Snape a prominent Healer, who along with his father, helped to develop the cure and treatment for a rare wizarding birth defect known as Invetrto Pectus, which affects the development of the heart. Romulus Rex Snape was a prominent Professional Quidditch player for England and now manages the Chudley Cannons, bringing them to the World Cup a record twenty one times. Hadrian James Snape, the current acting Headmaster of Hogwarts is also a well known Potions Master. Another child, their only daughter Olivia Eileen, passed away at the age of four from the same birth defect that her father and elder brother worked so hard to correct. Her death came six months prior to their discovery of the potion and treatment needed to cure the disorder. In addition to their three sons,

they had ten grandchildren, twenty four great grandchildren and sixty three great great grandchildren.

The funeral will be private at an undisclosed location for family and close friends only. A formal memorial service will be held at Hogwarts on June tenth, for students, families, and Ministry officials.

Our sincere condolences go out to Headmistress Snape's family. We wish to let them know that the entire Wizarding World is mourning with them. We have lost the greatest witch of our time. Were it not for Harry Potter Snape our world would have succumbed to Darkness and Evil. In the words of the Late Albus Dumbledore, 'Death is but the next great adventure.' Enjoy the adventure, Lady Snape, for you have earned it well. We will miss you dearly.

The End